



**101<sup>ST</sup> AIRBORNE** FROM EASY COMPANY TO HAMBURGER HILL

# HISTORY of WAR



## THE PIPER'S DEATH SONG

VICTORIA CROSS VALOUR  
AT DARGAI HEIGHTS

**GUERNICA**

**80**  
YEARS ON

**DAWN OF THE**

# BLITZKRIEG

HOW THE NAZIS UNLEASHED THEIR TERROR BOMBING TACTICS



## INKERMAN

BRITAIN'S DIE-HARD  
DEFENCE IN THE CRIMEAN

Future

ISSUE 040

**Digital Edition**

GreatDigitalMags.com

## WWI'S DEADLIEST DOGFIGHT

INSIDE THE CARNAGE  
OF BLOODY APRIL

## CRACKING JAPAN'S ENIGMA

THE USA'S UNSUNG  
CODE-BREAKERS



## PLUS

Simón de Bolívar ★

Hughes OH-6 Cayuse ★

Wehrmacht toilet paper ★

## ISRAEL DEFENCE FORCES ORIGINS

HOW ZIONIST MILITIAS  
BECAME STATE PROTECTORS



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# Welcome

**“Franco is about to deliver a mighty blow against which all resistance is useless... Basques! Surrender now and your lives will be spared!”**

– Nationalist radio broadcast, 25 April 1937

The 20th century saw increasingly deadly and effective technology used both on and off the battlefield. In the new era of total war, civilian populations became targets for bomber crews, and 80 years ago, on 26 April, the Basque town of Guernica was one such target.

At this time the aerial bombing of civilians was nothing new, but as Göring would later remark during his trial at Nuremberg, the destruction of Guernica was a deliberate opportunity to test new weapons and train his fledgling air force for a new era of warfare. Though over time this terrifying tactic would set cities across the

world ablaze on an unprecedented scale, the horror it dealt to this small settlement is remembered as its awful genesis.



**Tim Williamson**  
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## CONTRIBUTORS



**TOM GARNER**  
History of War's staff writer had his head in the clouds this issue, manoeuvring through the carnage of Bloody April (page 28). Over on page 54 he also pays homage to South America's conquering revolutionary, the peerless Simon de Bolivar.



**MIGUEL MIRANDA**  
Lifting the lid on yet another obscure chapter in military history, this issue Miguel explores the bizarre state of Transnistria, a troubling hotbed of nationalist factionalism where the tensions of the Cold War are alive and well (page 78).



**WILLIAM WELSH**  
The Crimean War saw some of the most famous victories and mishaps of the British Army. At Inkerman, the thin red line was pushed to breaking point by wave after wave of Russian conscripts try to break the siege of Sevastopol (page 40).

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Guernica by Pablo Picasso is one of the most powerful anti-war paintings in history



Image: Shutterstock





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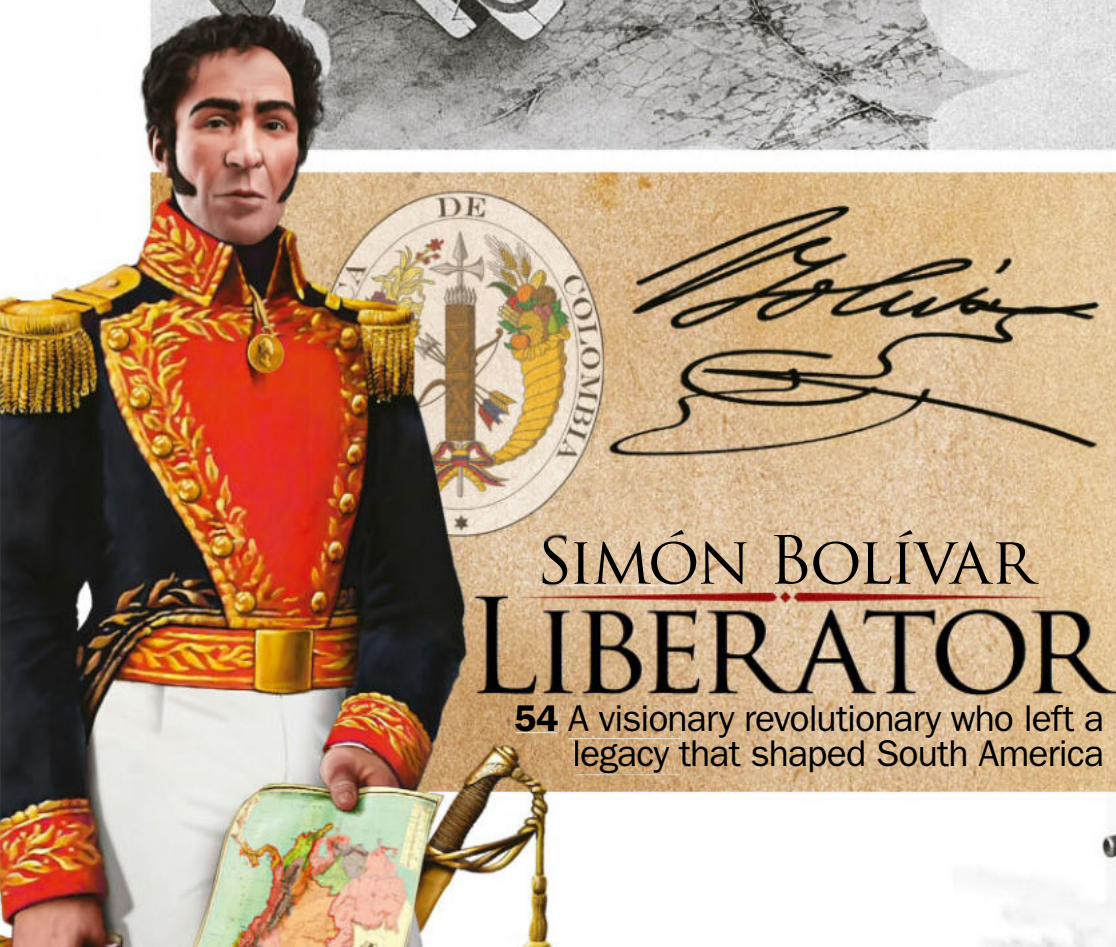
Take a look inside the 'Loach', a military and civilian helicopter still in use today

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This everyday item was a rare luxury for German soldiers serving on the front line

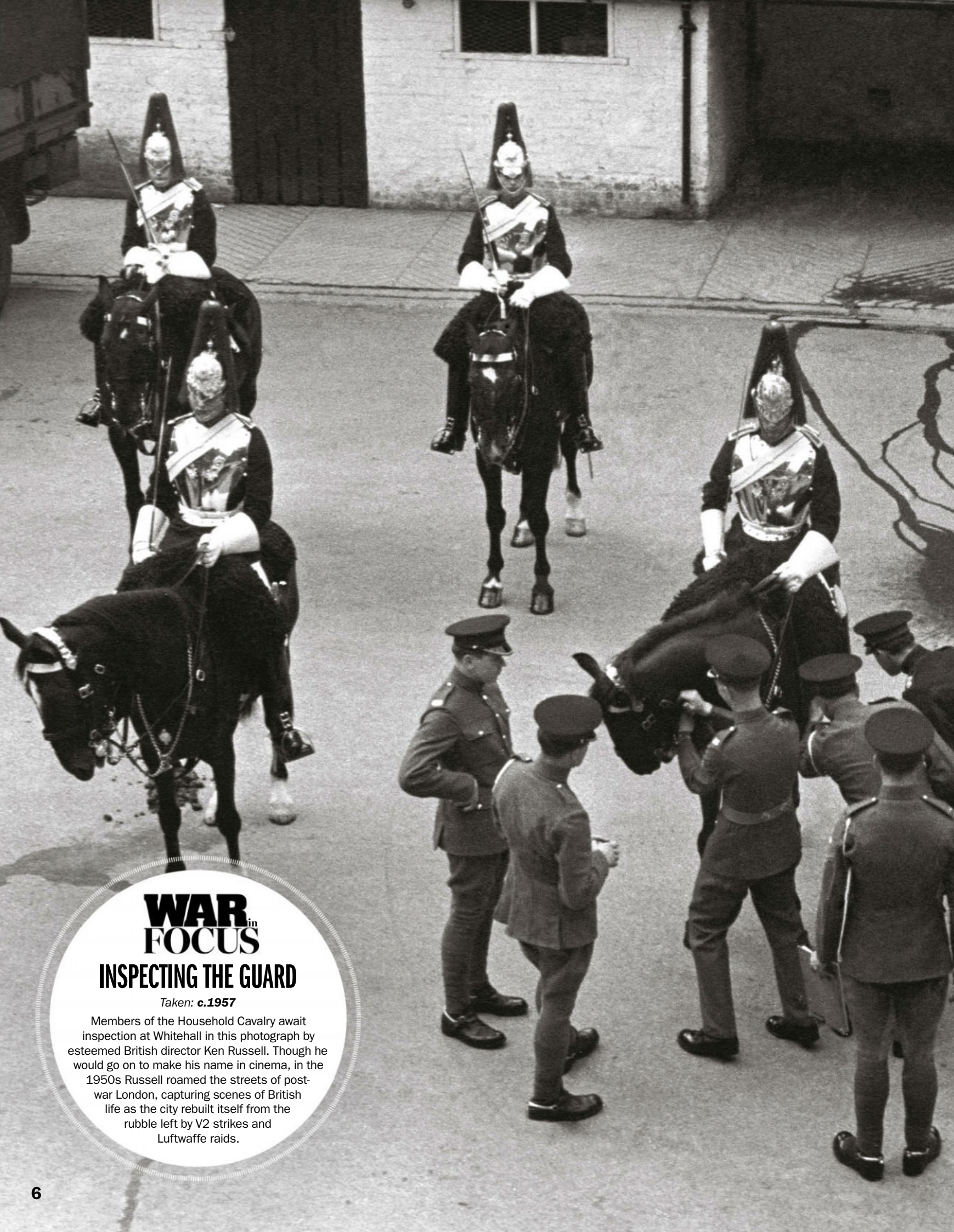


## **ORIGINS OF THE IDF**

**48** The birth of one of the most professional forces in the world







## **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

### **INSPECTING THE GUARD**

*Taken: c.1957*

Members of the Household Cavalry await inspection at Whitehall in this photograph by esteemed British director Ken Russell. Though he would go on to make his name in cinema, in the 1950s Russell roamed the streets of post-war London, capturing scenes of British life as the city rebuilt itself from the rubble left by V2 strikes and Luftwaffe raids.







# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## CAUTION: SNIPER

*Taken: c. May 1992*

A Bosnian soldier carefully peers around a corner, checking for snipers amid fighting in Sarajevo. The siege of the city during the Bosnian War saw horrific street clashes, where soldiers and civilians regularly became targets for snipers. The insignia on the soldier's arm is that of the Territorial Defence Force of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the precursor to the Republic's official army.













**WAR<sup>in</sup>  
FOCUS**  
**LEAP OF FREEDOM**

*Taken: 15 August 1961*

This iconic image shows Conrad Schumann, an East German NCO, defecting to the West just days after construction of the Berlin Wall began. Schumann gained instant fame for this act, though many of his friends and family remaining in the East considered the 19-year-old to be a traitor.



# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## THE EXPLOSION OF THE SPANISH FLAGSHIP

Painted: c.1621

Powder stores on the Spanish flagship San Augustin detonate during the Battle of Gibraltar (1607) in this dramatic painting by Cornelis Claesz van Wieringen. During the Eighty Years' War, or the Dutch War of Independence, the United Provinces allied with France and England against the Spanish Empire.









# TIMELINE OF THE...



# 101ST AIRBORNE

This elite light infantry division is trained for air assault operations and has been 'the tip of the spear' of the US Army since 1942

## WORLD WAR II

The 101st's most distinguished service occurred during WWII when its troops fought with distinction in Normandy, Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge among others.

101st Airborne troops pose with a captured Nazi vehicle flag a day after parachuting into Normandy

1942-45

1957

1965-72

## RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY

Although the division was founded in 1918, 101st Airborne's active history began in 1942 when its first commander, Major General William C Lee, observed, "The 101st has no history, but it has a rendezvous with destiny."

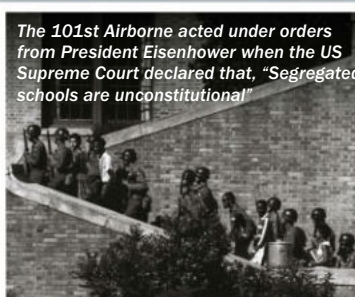
Right: The division's famous insignia is based on 'Old Abe', a bald eagle mascot of a Unionist Wisconsin infantry regiment during the American Civil War



## LITTLE ROCK NINE

In a significant milestone for the American Civil Rights movement, elements of the 327th Infantry in the 101st escorted nine African-American students to the formerly segregated Little Rock Central High School.

The 101st Airborne acted under orders from President Eisenhower when the US Supreme Court declared that, "Segregated schools are unconstitutional"



## VIETNAM WAR

Over seven years, the 101st fought in 45 operations including the Tet Offensive and the Battle of Hamburger Hill. The North Vietnamese were ordered to avoid the 101st at all costs because of their frequent success.

Right: Private Roger Chale after an all-night ambush patrol. 101st Airborne was the recipient of 17 Medal of Honor awards during the conflict







**SERVICE IN SOMALIA**  
 Due to the escalation of military and humanitarian operations, elements of the 101st Aviation Regiment were deployed to Somalia and came under hostile fire from Somali militiamen.  
  
*Left: Utilising Blackhawk helicopters, the 101st conducted military and humanitarian missions while in Somalia in 1992-3*

*Below: The Battle of Barawala Kalay Valley between 31 March and 8 April 2011 was a major combat victory for the 101st in Afghanistan*

## WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

101st Airborne was deployed to Afghanistan in 2001 following the September 11 attacks, and took part in multiple combat operations resulting in 166 deaths, the highest since the Vietnam War.

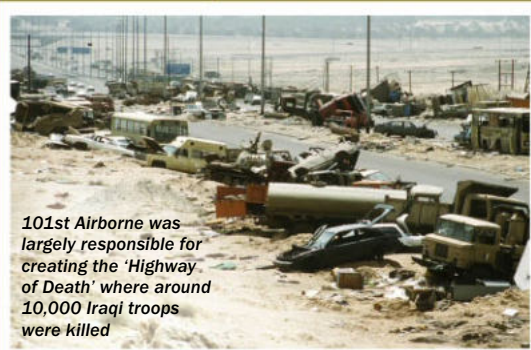


1990-91

1992-93

2001-14

2003-2011



101st Airborne was largely responsible for creating the 'Highway of Death' where around 10,000 Iraqi troops were killed

## GULF WAR

101st Airborne took part in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. It fired the first shots during the latter operation and conducted the largest air assault in history by securing Iraqi territory along the Euphrates River.

## IRAQ WAR

During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the 101st conducted a long air assault and assumed responsibility for Mosul and four provinces. It conducted many combat operations and today still trains Iraqi forces to counter insurgents.

*Right: Elements of the 327th Infantry Regiment took part in the raid that killed Uday and Qusay Hussein on 22 July 2003*





# THE EAGLES GO GLOBAL

The 101st Airborne Division has seen significant action all over the world, from the hedgerows of Normandy and the jungles of Vietnam to the deserts of the Middle East

## 1 MISSION ALBANY

6-15 JUNE 1944

Albany is the night-time parachute assault on D-Day to jump over enemy lines in the area around Utah Beach. More than 500 troops are killed and 60 per cent of 101st's equipment is captured but the designated breakout 'exits' are secured.

## 2 BATTLE OF CARENTAN

10-14 JUNE 1944

In order to link the invading Allied forces from Utah and Omaha beaches, Carentan must be taken. Despite heavy fighting and fierce German resistance, the town is successfully captured.

## 3 OPERATION MARKET GARDEN

17-25 SEPTEMBER 1944

The 101st takes part in the largest airborne assault of WWII to seize crucial bridges on the Rhine. Although Market Garden is a general failure, the 101st liberate several Dutch towns and buy time for the capture of Antwerp.

## 4 BASTOGNE

20 DECEMBER 1944-17 JANUARY 1945

Located at crucial point in the Ardennes, the 101st is completely surrounded by German forces for six days. Every attack is driven off with fierce fighting before relief arrives. The 101st then captures surrounding villages before invading the Ruhr.

**CAPTURE OF SAINT MARTIN-DE VARREVILLE AND BARQUETTE LOCK**

6 JUNE 1944, NORMANDY, FRANCE

**LIBERATION OF EINDHOVEN**

18 SEPTEMBER 1944, EINDHOVEN, NETHERLANDS

**CAPTURE OF RECOGNE, BOIS DES CORBEAUX AND FOY**

9-13 JANUARY 1945, BELGIUM

**CAPTURE OF NOVILLE, RACHAMPS AND BOURCY**

15-17 JANUARY 1945, BELGIUM

**BATTLE OF SAINT CÔME-DU-MONT**

7-8 JUNE 1944, SAINT CÔME-DU-MONT, FRANCE

**BRÉCOURT MANOR ASSAULT**

6 JUNE 1944, LE GRAND CHEMIN, FRANCE

**CAPTURE OF BERCHTESGADEN**

5 MAY 1945, BERCHTESGADEN, GERMANY



Left: Parachutes open overhead as waves of soldiers land in Holland during Market Garden



Members of 101st Airborne toast the capture of Adolf Hitler's Bavarian retreat at Berchtesgaden. Among the spoils was the Nazi high command's wine collection



Left: Members of the 101st walk past dead comrades, killed during the Christmas Eve bombing of Bastogne, 1944

**"THE 101ST IS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY GERMAN FORCES FOR SIX DAYS. EVERY ATTACK IS DRIVEN OFF WITH FIERCE FIGHTING BEFORE RELIEF ARRIVES"**



Kaufering, a subsidiary camp of the Dachau concentration camp, shortly after its liberation. Landsberg-Kaufering, Germany, April 29, 1945



## 5 LIBERATION OF KAUFERING CONCENTRATION CAMP

27-28 APRIL 1945

Kaufering IV is an SS-run sub-camp near Dachau. Along with 12th Armoured Division, the 101st liberates the camp but discovers 500 dead inmates. In the following days, the Americans order the local townspeople to bury the dead.

## 6 BATTLE OF HUÉ

30 JANUARY-3 MARCH 1968

As part of North Vietnam's Tet Offensive, the 101st begins to fight for the symbolic Hué City with other US forces. During this three-week urban battle 101st often engages in intense fighting but finally liberates it from the North Vietnamese.



Above: Residents, refugees and soldiers file through the messy ruins of Hué after South Vietnamese troops blast their way through a gate to the Imperial Palace

## BATTLE OF BARAWALA KALAY VALLEY

31 MARCH 2011-8 APRIL 2011, KUNAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

## OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

7 OCTOBER 2001-28 DECEMBER 2014, AFGHANISTAN

## OPERATION DESERT STORM

17 JANUARY-28 FEBRUARY 1991, IRAQ

## OPERATION SWARMER

16 MARCH-22 MARCH 2006, SAMARRA, IRAQ

## OPERATION ANACONDA

1-18 MARCH 2002, SHAHI KOT VALLEY, PAKTIA PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

## OPERATION DRAGON STRIKE

15 SEPTEMBER-31 DECEMBER 2010, KANDAHAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

## OPERATIONS SOMERSET PLAIN AND NEVADA EAGLE

1968, SHAU VALLEY, THUA THIEN PROVINCE, VIETNAM

## BATTLE OF HAMBURGER HILL

11-20 MAY 1969, DONG AP BIA MOUNTAIN, VIETNAM

## OPERATION HAWTHORNE

2-21 JUNE 1966, TOUMORONG, VIETNAM

**"THE 101ST SECURES THE CITY OF NAJAF WITH EIGHT CASUALTIES COMPARED TO HUNDREDS OF IRAQI SOLDIERS"**



Najaf, photographed in 2004, still bears the scars of battle from the initial invasion

## 7 BATTLE OF NAJAF

24 MARCH-4 APRIL 2003

During a ten-day battle in the opening stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 101st secures the city of Najaf with eight casualties compared to hundreds of Iraqi soldiers.

## 8 OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL

2015-PRESENT

101st Airborne is still engaged in the continuing conflict in Afghanistan. It was deployed to the country for the fifth time in autumn 2016 to train Afghan forces and conduct counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda and Islamic State groups.



FAMOUS BATTLE

# ASSAULT ON BRÉCOURT MANOR

During Operation Overlord, the 101st faced overwhelming odds fighting behind enemy lines

Members of the 101st  
prepare to make the  
jump over Normandy  
from their C-47

**"THE SCREAMING EAGLES PROVED  
RESOURCEFUL IN ACCOMPLISHING  
THEIR ASSIGNED MISSIONS  
DESPITE INCREDIBLE ODDS"**



**T**he Douglas C-47 transport planes bucked in the rough winds, anti-aircraft fire flashed as shrapnel showered their sides like hail peppering a tin roof, and with the green light, cascades of paratroopers leaped into the night sky. After 22 months of training as World War II wore on, the 101st Airborne Division was at war for the first time.

Charged with seizing and holding numerous objectives during the Allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944, the Screaming Eagles proved resourceful in accomplishing their assigned missions despite incredible odds. Scattered far across Normandy, some units miles from their assigned drop zones, elements of the 101st nevertheless set to work.

### Assuming command

Amid the confusion of the airdrop, the plane carrying 1st Lieutenant Thomas Meehan, commander of Company E, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), took enemy fire, burst into flames, and crashed, killing everyone on board. Unable to locate Meehan, 1st Lieutenant Richard Winters, the executive officer, assumed command of Company E. The night was harrowing for Winters and other troopers of the 101st, but he was able to assemble a handful of men and set off in darkness toward the battalion command post at the village of Le Grand Chemin.

Winters had lost all his equipment during the drop and even had to scrounge a weapon. After a few brushes with German infantry, the paratroopers reached headquarters as the first hint of daylight tinged the eastern sky. There was no time to mourn those lost, missing and presumed dead. There was an immediate task at hand, and Winters remembered the vague orders he received, "There's fire along that hedgerow there! Take care of it."

### Silencing the guns

Even as Winters conducted a personal reconnaissance, the ominous reports of several enemy guns echoed. The young lieutenant selected a dozen men and put together a plan to eliminate what had originally been reported as a battery of German 88mm guns firing on American troops slogging ashore at Utah Beach. In fact, the Germans had positioned four 105mm guns at a farmstead called

Brécourt Manor, three miles south west of the beach. These guns had excellent fields of fire and would undoubtedly take a heavy toll as American infantrymen emerged through one of the Utah Beach exits or causeways. Although Winters and his tiny command had been in combat for only a few hours, their intense training paid off from the start.

### Textbook tactics

Winters positioned a pair of Browning .30-caliber machine guns to provide covering fire, and as the assault progressed, these light weapons could relocate. The Germans' own network of connecting defensive trenches could be used by the attacking Americans, who crouched low and moved quickly from gun to gun. Taking out enemy machine gun positions with grenades and rifle fire, the paratroopers shot down the German artillerymen or put them to flight, and then dropped blocks of explosives down the barrels of the heavy weapons. These were detonated with clusters of German grenades. One paratrooper was killed and another wounded as three 105mm guns were quickly destroyed.

Just as Winters's band of troopers prepared to take out the last heavy weapon, a squad from Company D, 506th PIR, appeared on the scene under 2nd Lieutenant Ronald Speirs, who requested the opportunity to neutralise the fourth gun. Winters agreed but watched in dismay as Speirs's men charged the enemy position without the cover of the nearby trench; two were killed and one was wounded.

### Remarkable feat

Winters and his men had accomplished their mission in startling fashion, effectively wiping out a platoon of German infantry, killing 15 enemy soldiers and capturing 12 more. Before heavy machine-gun fire coming from the large stone house that dominated Brécourt Manor prompted the paratroopers to retire, Winters gathered valuable intelligence, including a map that disclosed the locations of German artillery and fortified machine-gun positions in a sizable area of the Cotentin Peninsula of France.

Months of bitter fighting lay ahead, but for Company E, 506th PIR, 101st Airborne Division, the beginning was auspicious indeed. The assault on the guns at Brécourt Manor was executed in textbook fashion and it is still studied in military schools to this day.

*Below: The imposing stone house at Brécourt Manor housed German machine gun emplacements on D-Day*



# WORTHY OF HIGHER RECOGNITION?

## DESPITE THE RECOMMENDATION OF HIS COMMANDING OFFICER, LIEUTENANT RICHARD WINTERS DID NOT RECEIVE THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR BRÉCOURT MANOR

The exploits of Lieutenant Richard Winters – who rose to the rank of major during World War II – and his Company E, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, were immortalised in the book *Band Of Brothers* by historian Stephen Ambrose and the subsequent 2001 HBO miniseries.

At Brécourt Manor, Winters exhibited extraordinary bravery, initiative and leadership qualities. In one of their earliest actions, his troopers received three Silver Stars, 12 Bronze Stars and four Purple Heart medals for their heroism. Winters's commanding officer, Colonel Robert Sink, recommended the lieutenant for the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for valour. However, Winters received the Distinguished Service Cross instead. A US Army policy of one Medal of Honor recipient per division precluded that award going to Winters. Lieutenant Colonel Robert G Cole, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 502nd PIR, was awarded the 101st Airborne Division's Medal of Honor for heroism during the Normandy campaign while fighting at one of the causeways off Utah Beach on 11 June 1944. Cole was killed by a German sniper in Holland before he received his medal. An effort to upgrade Winters's decoration failed to advance beyond committee in the US House of Representatives.

*Below: Lieutenant Colonel Robert Cole, 502nd PIR, was awarded the Medal of Honor for valour in Normandy*



Images: Alamy



# WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT

During WWII, the average Airborne trooper carried 70 pounds of gear, while an officer carried about 90

*Below: The Colt Model 1911A1 was a common variant of the original 1911 that was also issued during World War II*

**D**uring the assault on Hitler's Fortress Europe, German soldiers were astonished by the amount and variety of equipment that American paratroopers carried. A typical trooper of the 101st carried everything from rations to extra ammunition, grenades, map, compass, a pocket or combat knife, gloves and even toilet tissue. At times extra gear was even carried in a leg bag.

## COLT MODEL 1911

An iconic weapon of the war, the Colt Model 1911 .45-caliber pistol was the standard-issue sidearm of the US Army. It contained a seven-round internal clip and was favoured for its 'knockdown' capability. The Model 1911 was often carried by airborne officers.



**"IT CONTAINED A SEVEN-ROUND INTERNAL CLIP AND WAS FAVOURED FOR ITS 'KNOCKDOWN' CAPABILITY"**

## M42 JUMP UNIFORM

Issued to American paratroopers during the early World War II period, the M42 jump uniform consisted of the coat, parachute jumper and trousers. Both were dyed in the army colour olive drab #3. Although the combination was replaced as standard issue in 1943, veteran paratroopers often retained their M42 uniforms.



*The M42 jump uniform had 11 pockets of various sizes to help the easy carrying of equipment*

## TL-122 FLASHLIGHT

The TL-122 flashlight was developed and manufactured by several companies during World War II. The US government had requested a flashlight that could be mass produced and issued to troops being deployed to Europe and the Pacific. Paratroopers carried the TL-122 during combat operations.

## MESS KIT

The US Army Model 1932 and Model 1942 mess kits were made to work easily with the precooked portions contained in C-rations. Half of the open kit could serve as a crude skillet if a soldier had the relative luxury of a fire or other source of heat.

*Below: C-rations were a staple field dinner for soldiers*



## M1 HELMET

This standard-issue helmet was worn by US Army and ground forces for decades. Adopted in 1941, the helmet was manufactured in staggering numbers and almost 22 million were made by 1945. The M1 was complete with a chinstrap and liner, which held the adjustable suspension system.



*Right: Phased out in the 1980s, the M1 helmet has become an iconic piece of kit*



**★ THOMPSON SUBMACHINE GUN**  
Made famous during the Gangster era of the 1920s, the Thompson submachine gun, often carried by an officer, provided automatic weapons firepower at the airborne squad level.

**READY TO JUMP**  
Grimly confident American paratroopers, with their unit insignia obscured, prepare to board a transport plane prior to a combat jump during Operation Market Garden, September 1944. They are laden with a variety of equipment and weaponry for operations on the ground.

**“THE THOMPSON SUBMACHINE GUN, OFTEN CARRIED BY AN OFFICER, PROVIDED AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIREPOWER AT THE AIRBORNE SQUAD LEVEL”**

**★ RESERVE PARACHUTE**  
American paratroopers carried primary and reserve parachutes. In the event of primary failure, the trooper deployed the reserve chute with a ripcord.

**★ SHELTER HALF**  
A rolled, water-resistant shelter half was used to construct a tent for some degree of protection from the elements, but it had numerous other applications.

**★ COMBAT KNIFE**  
Sometimes paratroopers were allowed to carry a fixed-blade combat knife of their own choosing. In this case, the trooper has secured one to his right leg.

**★ M1 GARAND RIFLE**  
The standard-issue infantry rifle for American troops in World War II was the M1 Garand seen here. However, airborne troops often carried the more compact M1 carbine.

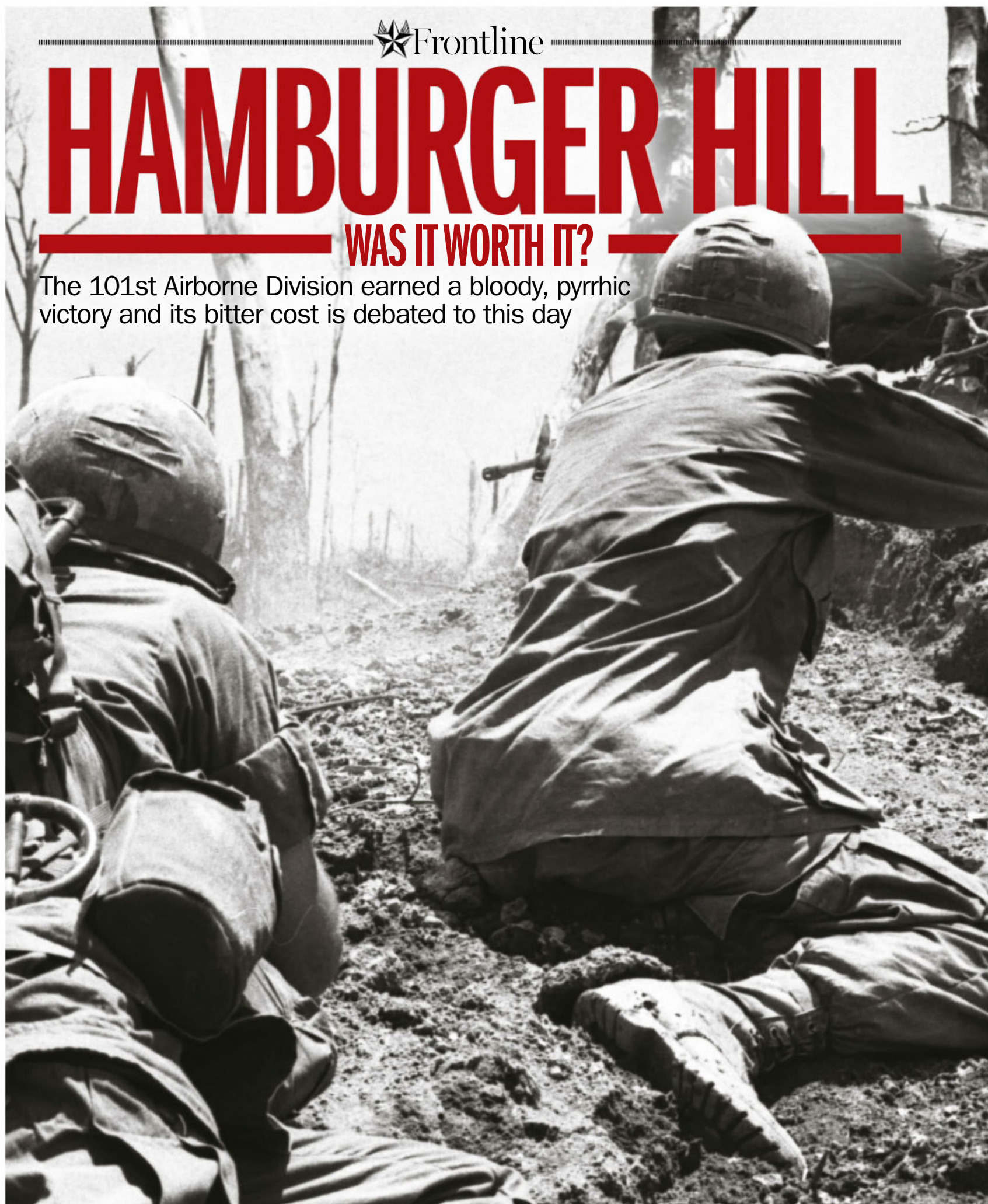




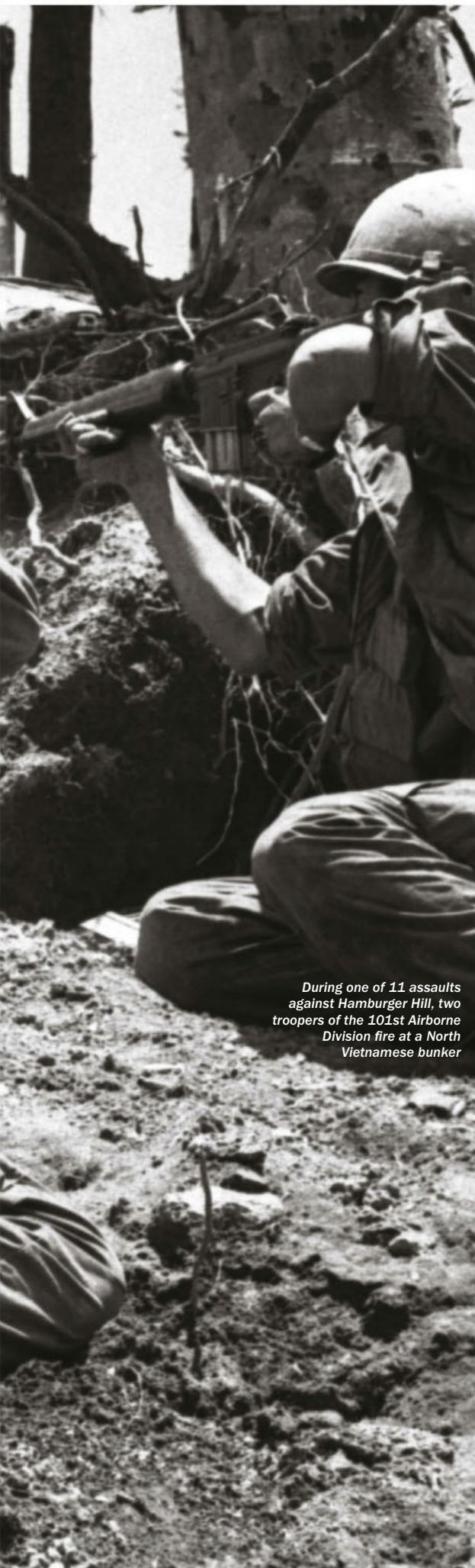
# HAMBURGER HILL

## WAS IT WORTH IT?

The 101st Airborne Division earned a bloody, pyrrhic victory and its bitter cost is debated to this day







During one of 11 assaults against Hamburger Hill, two troopers of the 101st Airborne Division fire at a North Vietnamese bunker

**W**hen the fight was over, a weary trooper of the 101st Airborne Division scrawled the words 'Hamburger Hill' on the bottom of a C-ration crate and nailed it to a shredded tree. Some time later, another trooper scratched beneath it the haunting question, "Was it worth it?"

For ten days in the spring of 1969, a brigade of the 101st – comprised of three battalions, the 3rd/187th, 2nd/501st, and 1st/506th – had carried the brunt of the fighting against the elite 29th Regiment of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) known as the 'Pride of Ho Chi Minh'. The objective of the 101st's 3rd Brigade, commanded by Colonel Joseph Conmy, was high ground labelled Hill 937 on military maps and surrounding ridges, which extended through South Vietnam's embattled A Shau Valley.

Ostensibly, the capture of Hill 937 would eliminate the threat posed by the NVA and Viet Cong guerrillas to the provincial capital of Hue and other towns. However, Communist forces had occupied the high ground for some time, fortifying ridges and draws with bunkers, booby traps, machine-gun nests and tunnels.

Although the Americans won the fight, the cost was considerable. While estimates of NVA dead neared 650, the 101st suffered 72 killed and 372 wounded; and the 3rd/187th had sustained 39 dead and 290 wounded. Ironically, two weeks after the battle, Hill 937 and the surrounding hard-won ground were abandoned and reoccupied by the NVA.

At the time of the battle for Hamburger Hill, a larger debate over American involvement in Vietnam was smouldering. A recent poll had revealed that the American public was already war weary with only 39 per cent supporting continued military involvement in Southeast Asia. Senior American commanders in the field prosecuted a strategy that departed from convention. Seizing and holding territory was virtually impossible in the midst of a well-organised and motivated Communist insurgency supported by a modern NVA. Therefore, the mantra of 'body count' took hold in a war of attrition that American generals believed one day would bring the war to a favourable conclusion.

As the agonising days wore on, word of the brutal battle at Hamburger Hill filtered back to rear areas. The media filed disturbing reports from the field. *Associated Press* reporter Jay Sharbutt wrote, "The paratroopers came down the mountain, their green shirts darkened with sweat, their weapons gone, their bandages stained brown and red — with mud and blood."

Reaction to the toll at Hamburger Hill was swift and scathing in Washington, DC. Senator Edward Kennedy railed, "I feel it is both senseless and irresponsible to continue to send our young men to their deaths to capture hills and positions that have no relation to ending this conflict." He referred to such operations as "madness."

Other lawmakers raised a chorus of concern. Ohio Congressman Stephen Young observed, "Our generals in Vietnam acted as if they had never studied Lee and Jackson's strategy. Instead, they fling our paratroopers piecemeal in frontal assaults. Instead of seeking to surround the enemy and to assault the hill from the sides and front simultaneously, there was one frontal assault after another, killing our boys who went up Hamburger Hill."

No fewer than 11 assaults had been required to secure Hill 937. In a single attack on 14 May, the 3rd/187th, led by Lieutenant Colonel Weldon Honeycutt, suffered terrible casualties. Company C alone lost 40 enlisted men, two platoon leaders, three non-commissioned officers and its executive officer in the furious fight. Company D, attempting a flanking manoeuvre, lost 12 killed and 80 wounded. When the fight continued the following day, elements of Companies A and B advanced within 150 metres of the summit but lost three dozen men and withdrew.

When at last the exhausted troopers of the 101st Airborne Division claimed the summit of Hamburger Hill just before noon on 20 May 1969, it was apparent that many enemy troops had slipped away from the combat zone. Within days, *LIFE Magazine* published a poignant feature titled: "Vietnam: One Week's Dead," sending a shockwave across the country.

Slowly but surely, American military strategy in Vietnam morphed into an effort to exit. It was a strategy shaped, at least in part, by the experience of the 101st at Hamburger Hill.

**"COMMUNIST FORCES HAD OCCUPIED THE HIGH GROUND FOR SOME TIME, FORTIFYING RIDGES AND DRAWS WITH BUNKERS, BOOBY TRAPS, MACHINE-GUN NESTS AND TUNNELS"**



Wounded troopers of the 101st Airborne Division are treated while awaiting evacuation by helicopter after the Battle of Hamburger Hill



# IN THE RANKS

Since its activation in 1942, the 101st Airborne Division has been deployed around the globe on a range of operations

**T**hroughout its history, the 101st has deployed specialised units that operate varied equipment and serve in different capacities related to mission fulfilment. These include combat troopers engaged as pathfinders, medical personnel, ordnance, logistics and supply specialists and aviators.

## 'FILTHY THIRTEEN' PARATROOPER, c.1940s

NAMED AFTER THEIR LACK OF PERSONAL HYGIENE IN THE RUN UP TO D-DAY, TROOPS OF THE 101ST LOST HALF THEIR NUMBER SECURING VITAL BRIDGES

The men of the 1st Demolition Section, Regimental Headquarters Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, set themselves apart. The nickname, the Filthy Thirteen, came from the fact that the 13 enlisted troopers in the section seldom bathed or shaved and rarely washed their uniforms while training for the D-Day invasion.

None of the unit's other antics is as famous as the bold statement made hours prior to D-Day – the troopers cut their hair in broad single Native American Mohawk strips and daubed


their faces with war paint to frighten the Germans and to honour Sergeant Jack McNiece, who was part Choctaw. Images from that day are unmistakable.

In one famous photo, trooper Clarence Ware paints the face of trooper Charles Plaud. Ware's entrenching tool and canteen are prominent on his web belt. Plaud is holding the well-known Thompson submachine gun while a utility bag hangs at his waist. On 6 June 1944, the Filthy Thirteen jumped into Normandy to secure vital bridges, losing half their number as casualties. The group inspired the 1960s Hollywood film *The Dirty Dozen*.



The 1st Demolition Section, Regimental Headquarters, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment sported Mohawk haircuts and war paint for D-Day





*Left: The 502nd were instrumental in providing citywide security for a recovering Iraq*



*Above: Members of the brigade carry out their second tour in Iraq in an AH-64 Apache, 2005*

## 101ST COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

ALONG WITH THE HELICOPTER TRANSPORT THAT DESIGNATES THE 101ST AIRBORNE AS AIR ASSAULT, ITS ATTACK HELICOPTERS FLEW IN DESERT STORM

The 101st Airborne Division deployed to Saudi Arabia in August 1990, days after Iraqi forces invaded neighbouring Kuwait. During Operation Desert Storm, elements of the division fired the first shots in the liberation of the tiny country when a task force of Apache attack helicopters destroyed enemy radar sites on 17 January 1991. Helicopters of the 101st also executed the longest air assault in history at that time, as the division secured the flanks of the coalition offensive against Saddam Hussein.

## 502ND INFANTRY REGIMENT

CALLED TO ASSIST IN THE US INVASION OF IRAQ, SOLDIERS OF THE 502ND ENGAGED IN BRUTAL STREET-TO-STREET FIGHTING

Tracing its lineage to the earliest days of the 101st Airborne Division, the 502nd Infantry Regiment played a key role in the capture of the city of Karbala during the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. The 502nd engaged in street-to-street fighting against

insurgents, destroying caches of arms and equipment and discovering an insurgent training camp. After 36 hours of urban combat, Karbala was secured on 6 April 2003. The 3rd Battalion, 502nd received a valorous unit award for the operation.

## 327TH GLIDER INFANTRY REGIMENT

ONCE A GLIDER OUTFIT, THE 327TH INFANTRY REGIMENT CONTINUES TO OPERATE IN THE AIR ASSAULT ROLE

During World War II, the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, participated in major operations, riding into battle aboard wood and canvas gliders such as the CG-4 Waco. The landings were best described as controlled crashes. In mid-1968, the 101st was moved and designated as airmobile for its conversion from planes to helicopters, and in 1974, it was again redesignated as air assault. In this role, the modern 327th Infantry Regiment has deployed in Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm, Iraq and Afghanistan.

*Below: The Waco CG-4 could carry up to 13 men, plus all their jump equipment*





# HEROES & COMMANDERS

The 'Screaming Eagles' have produced some of the bravest and most intelligent soldiers in the US Army



William C Lee during paratrooper training c.1942. His relentless enthusiasm for airborne warfare was a significant factor in the American victory in Europe

**WILLIAM C LEE**  
FATHER OF THE US AIRBORNE  
YEARS: 1895-1948 RANK: MAJOR GENERAL

Commissioned as an officer in 1917, Lee served in WWI with the American Expeditionary Force as a platoon and company commander and stayed in the army after the Armistice. As a major, he observed the development of German airborne troops under the Nazis and became convinced that the US Army should have a similar outfit. Despite initial opposition from his direct superiors Lee's

ideas eventually reached the White House, and President Franklin D Roosevelt was so impressed that he immediately ordered airborne planning and training.

Lee became the first commander of the 101st Airborne and promised his new recruits in 1942, "The 101st has no history, but it has a rendezvous with destiny." He subsequently developed plans for the air invasion of Normandy on D-Day and trained to jump with his men although he was unable to eventually able to take part due to a heart attack. To honour their commander paratroopers yelled "Bill Lee!" when they jumped out of their aircraft on D-Day.

**"TO HONOUR THEIR COMMANDER PARATROOPERS YELLED 'BILL LEE!' WHEN THEY JUMPED OUT OF THEIR AIRCRAFT ON D-DAY"**

## RICHARD WINTERS

YEARS: 1918-2011 RANK: MAJOR

THE HEROIC COMMANDER OF 'EASY COMPANY' DURING WWII

As a commanding officer of E 'Easy' Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, Winters's leadership and heroism set the standard for what American airborne troops could achieve.

As a lieutenant, Winters was dropped behind enemy lines before the Allied landings on Utah Beach on 6 June 1944 and became Easy Company's commanding officer within hours when his superior officer was killed. On the same day, he led 13 men against 50-60 German troops in an attempt to destroy an artillery battery at Brécourt Manor that was disrupting the landings at Utah Beach. The four howitzers were protected by trenches but Winters led a swift assault from different directions that convinced the Germans they were being attacked by a larger force.

The guns were disabled at the cost of four American dead to around 15-20 Germans. Winters also discovered maps of German artillery positions in the Cotentin Peninsula and for his successes on D-Day, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and promoted to captain the following month.

After Normandy, Winters led Easy Company into the Netherlands and took part in many combat missions. On 5 October 1944, he discovered 300 German troops after climbing a dike near Zetten. The Germans posed a serious threat to American forces but Winters, with only 35 men, opened fire and routed the enemy. The American casualties were one dead and 22 wounded compared to German casualties of 50 dead, 11 captured and 100 wounded.

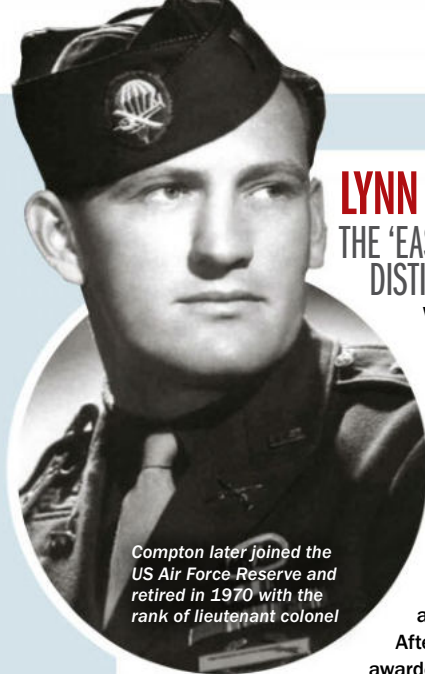
Winters stayed with Easy Company throughout the Battle of the Bulge and took part in the defence of Foy near Bastogne. Promoted to major in March 1945, Winters and Easy Company captured Adolf Hitler's retreat at Berchtesgaden on 5 May and ended the war there. Winters was also awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart but remained modest about his achievements stating, "The company belonged to the men, the officers were merely the caretakers."

**Right:** A retired Major Richard D Winters poses with an American flag, 2000

**Far right:** This Normandy statue to commemorate D-Day uses Winters's likeness and the dedication bears his words, "Wars do not make great men, but they do bring out the greatness in good men"







## LYNN COMPTON

### THE 'EASY COMPANY' OFFICER TURNED DISTINGUISHED PROSECUTOR

**YEARS: 1921-2012**  
**RANK: LIEUTENANT COLONEL**

A member of the famous 'Easy Company' during WWII, Compton joined the US Army in 1943 and was commissioned as a first lieutenant in Easy Company. After landing in Normandy in the early hours of 6 June, Compton was second-in-command at the Brécourt Manor Assault and at one point threw a grenade that hit a German soldier in the head as it exploded.

After the position was captured, Compton was awarded the Silver Star, the US military's third-highest medal for valour in combat.

Compton subsequently received the Purple Heart after being wounded during Operation Market Garden before fighting at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. He described the fighting as "unprecedented gore" and was eventually relieved, possibly due to combat fatigue. Although he saw no more combat in WWII, Compton became a distinguished lawyer and famously successfully prosecuted Sirhan B Sirhan in 1969 for the assassination of Robert F Kennedy.

## JOSEPH R BEYRLE

### THE AMERICAN WHO FOUGHT WITH THE RED ARMY

**YEARS: 1923-2004 RANK: STAFF SERGEANT**

Known as 'Jumpin' Joe' for his parachuting enthusiasm, Beyrle is reputed to be the only man to have fought both for the USA and the Soviet Union during WWII. As a member of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Beyrle jumped into occupied France on 5 June 1944 but he was captured three days later.

Beyrle was moved through seven Nazi prison camps and was tortured and interrogated by the Gestapo. Although he lost a third of his body weight, he escaped Stalag III-C POW camp and ran into a Russian tank unit. He won their trust by utilising his demolition skills and fought with the unit for three weeks as a machine gunner but was seriously wounded by German dive-bombers. After being transported to a hospital in Moscow, Beyrle had to convince the US embassy that he wasn't dead before being repatriated home. It transpired that he had been declared killed in action and his parents had held a memorial service.



*Left: Beyrle was decorated by both the USA and Russian president Boris Yeltsin who presented his Red Army medals at the White House in 1994*

## DAVID PETRAEUS

### 101ST AIRBORNE'S COMMANDER DURING THE IRAQ WAR

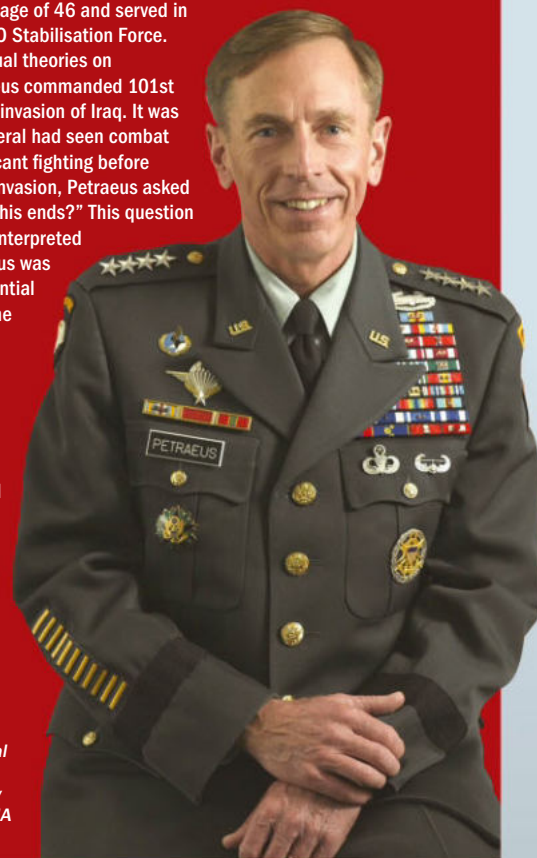
**YEARS: 1952-PRESENT RANK: GENERAL (FOUR STAR)**

Graduating from West Point in 1974, Petraeus rose steadily through the ranks and first served in 101st Airborne as a lieutenant colonel. By 2000, Petraeus was a brigadier general at the age of 46 and served in Bosnia as part of the NATO Stabilisation Force.

Known for his intellectual theories on counterinsurgency, Petraeus commanded 101st Airborne during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. It was the first time that the general had seen combat and the 101st saw significant fighting before Baghdad fell. During the invasion, Petraeus asked journalists, "Tell me how this ends?" This question has retrospectively been interpreted as suggesting that Petraeus was already aware that substantial difficulties would follow the fall of Saddam Hussein.

In the following ten months, attempts were made to stabilise Mosul with Petraeus adopting a 'hearts and minds' approach toward the local populations by holding elections and restoring the infrastructure. This military approach to rebuilding Mosul led some Iraqis to dub Petraeus as 'King David.'

*Right: Petraeus later commanded multinational forces in Iraq, US forces in Afghanistan and briefly became director of the CIA between 2011-12*



## LESLIE H SABO JR

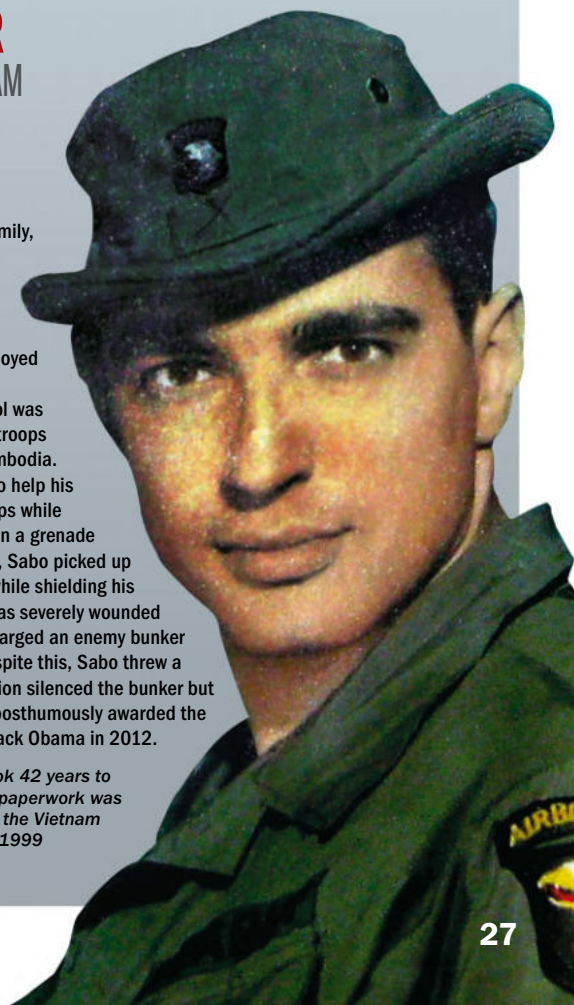
### THE FORGOTTEN VIETNAM WAR HERO

**YEARS: 1948-1970**  
**RANK: SERGEANT**

Born in Austria to a Hungarian family, Sabo immigrated to the USA in 1950 and was drafted into the US Army in April 1969. He was assigned as a rifleman to 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne and deployed to Vietnam in 1970.

On 10 May 1970, Sabo's patrol was ambushed by North Vietnamese troops near a remote border area of Cambodia. Sabo was in the rear but he ran to help his comrades and killed several troops while charging an enemy position. When a grenade landed near one of his comrades, Sabo picked up the explosive and threw it away while shielding his friend with his own body. Sabo was severely wounded by the resulting blast but then charged an enemy bunker and received mortal wounds. Despite this, Sabo threw a grenade and the resulting explosion silenced the bunker but also cost him his life. Sabo was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama in 2012.

*Right: Sabo's Medal of Honor took 42 years to be awarded because the proper paperwork was thought to have been lost during the Vietnam War. It was only rediscovered in 1999*





In 1917, the Imperial German  
Air Service shot down  
hundreds of Allied aircraft in  
an event that escalated the  
grim nature of aerial warfare



# BLOODY APRIL

WORDS TOM GARNER



A German Albatros D.III closes in on its prey, a British S.E.5, and prepares to unleash a deadly hail of bullets



**O**n 2 April 1917, a skilful German pilot was searching the skies over France for enemy aircraft when a British fighter came into view, "Suddenly one of the impertinent fellows tried to drop down on me. I allowed him to come near and then we started a merry quadrille. Sometimes my opponent flew on his back and sometimes he did other tricks. He had a double-seated chaser. I was his master and very soon I recognised that he could not escape."

The British pilot soon realised he was duelling an expert fighter and attempted to flee. "He tried to escape me. That was too bad. I attacked him again and went so low that I feared I should touch the roofs of the houses of the village beneath me. The Englishman defended himself up to the last moment. At the very end, I felt my engine had been hit. Still I did not let go. He had to fall. He rushed at full speed right into a block of houses. He paid for his stupidity with his life."

The victor of this swift, but bloody duel was Manfred von Richthofen, the highest scoring ace of WWI, and this particular triumph was only the start of his most successful month. He alone would score 20 victories during a period where the British lost more aircraft than at any other time during the war and the aerial massacre would become known to history by an evocative name: Bloody April.

### A new type of war

Contrary to popular belief, aerial warfare was not invented between 1914-18. Aeroplanes had already been used on bombardment missions during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-12, but it would take WWI to involve aircraft in a significant role and on a large scale for the first time.

In 1914, senior officers initially met the usefulness of aircraft with significant scepticism and they were mainly used for observation missions. Nevertheless, technology developed rapidly and by 1915 the Germans had installed machine guns that could fire through the propeller of their aeroplanes. This was the true birth of the fighter aircraft and aerial warfare suddenly became just as important as land or naval operations. Consequently, German airmen had a significant advantage over their enemies during 1915 and their air superiority lasted until mid-1916.

**"SOMETIMES MY OPPONENT FLEW ON HIS BACK AND SOMETIMES HE DID OTHER TRICKS. HE HAD A DOUBLE-SEATED CHASER. I WAS HIS MASTER AND VERY SOON I RECOGNISED THAT HE COULD NOT ESCAPE"**

At the height of fighting during the Battle of Verdun, the Allies gained dominance through the creation of the French fighting squadrons and the expansion of the British Royal Flying (RFC) Corps. The balance of power was to change once again when the Germans reorganised their own squadrons and introduced even more modern fighters. This aerial arms race was swift and it reached a deadly crescendo in April 1917 when the Germans forcefully reasserted their mastery of the skies on the Western Front.

### The Royal Flying Corps

The fight for air supremacy during April 1917 was primarily fought between the new air forces of the Royal Flying Corps and the Imperial German Air Service (Luftstreitkräfte) and it was the former that suffered the most. Formed in April 1912, the RFC was the air wing of the British Army and initially only had 63 aircraft spread out over four squadrons by 1914. By July 1916, it had rapidly expanded to 421 aircraft and 27 squadrons in France that gave it air supremacy over the Germans. However, its size was also its weakness and the RFC's expansion put considerable strain on its recruiting and training system in addition to the aircraft supply system.

It was the RFC's training system in particular that was arguably its greatest flaw. British pilot training was woefully inadequate at the beginning of WWI with entry qualifications based primarily on attendance at public school rather than aptitude. Once accepted, the young and enthusiastic recruits were considered able

*Below: In this official portrait of 1917, Manfred von Richthofen was at the peak of his powers and is wearing the Pour le Mérite*





to fly solo within two hours of instruction. Poor instructors and information further hampered this already alarmingly short training time.

Most pilot instructors had been withdrawn from active combat due to exhaustion and mental breakdowns – consequently only ten per cent were effective teachers. Furthermore, training manuals were substandard, with one devoting only six of its 141 pages to the actual techniques of flying. This left out vital subjects such as aircraft characteristics, enemy tactics, formation flying, gunnery and emergency procedures.

Finally, there was the problem of the training aircraft. The British Farman aircraft's top speed was only 40mph but it would stall at less than 35mph and then go into a spin. This small margin of speed was difficult for trainee pilots to handle and the results were deadly. RFC deaths in training were shockingly high. Out of the 14,166 pilots who died during WWI, 8,000 died in training and individual deaths occurred on an average of one per 90 hours flying time.

If a pilot did survive training he would be deployed to France with as few as 15-20 hours

flying time and often less due to the great demand. Upon arrival at his designated combat squadron, he would almost immediately be sent on a patrol mission without cover from an experienced pilot who could show him the basics of aerial warfare.

By 1916, an RFC pilot's survival chances were further diminished by the huge array of varying aircraft in service. In December 1916 the British armed forces had 76 different types of aircraft and 57 types of engine. Each aircraft was virtually handmade and because aeronautical engineers were poorly paid, it was reflected in their workmanship. Major defects were commonplace such as splitting struts, ripped fabric and collapsing landing gear and wings. Many of the British aircraft were simply unsafe for anyone to fly and they were not easily repairable. Arguably, the only advantage the British had over the Germans was numerical supremacy.

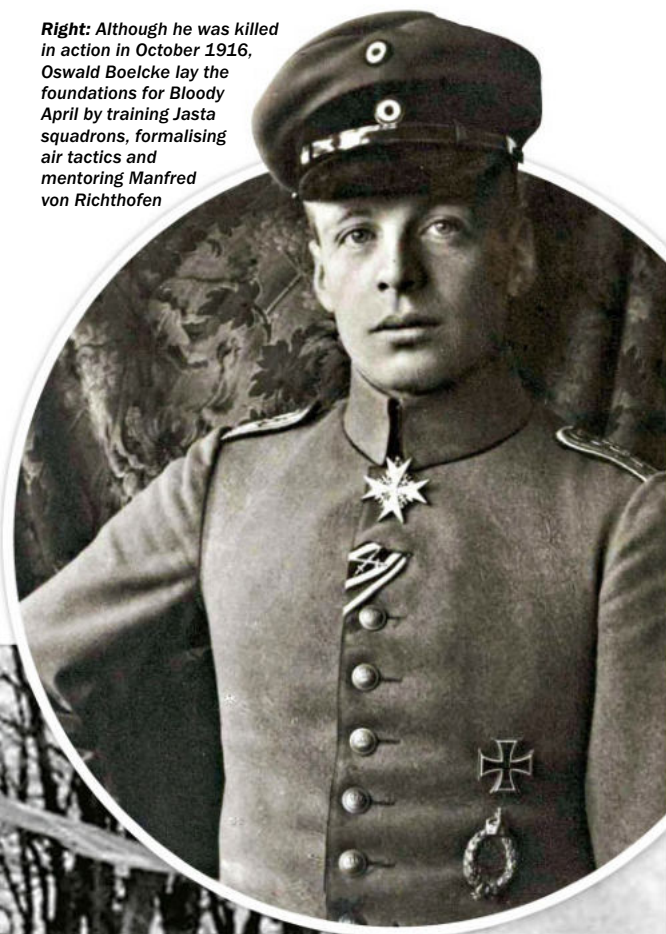
### Dicta Boelcke

By contrast, the German and French air forces operated more efficiently. French training was

thorough and organised into sections where the student learned the basics of flying before moving onto more complex lessons. For example, French pilots were given two months training on maintaining engines and were ordered to analyse pilots' mistakes.

However, it was the German Luftstreitkräfte that was the best organised. The German accident rate for trainee pilots was a quarter of the British and they were also helped by the

*Right: Although he was killed in action in October 1916, Oswald Boelcke lay the foundations for Bloody April by training Jasta squadrons, formalising air tactics and mentoring Manfred von Richthofen*



**“RFC DEATHS IN TRAINING WERE SHOCKINGLY HIGH. OUT OF THE 14,166 PILOTS WHO DIED DURING WWI, 8,000 DIED IN TRAINING AND INDIVIDUAL DEATHS OCCURRED ON AN AVERAGE OF ONE PER 90 HOURS FLYING TIME”**



*Manfred von Richthofen seated in the cockpit of his Albatros aircraft with other pilots from Jasta 11 on 23 April 1917*



# THE HANGAR OF DEADLY KITES

THE OUTCOME OF BLOODY APRIL WAS LARGELY DEFINED BY THE QUALITY OF AIRCRAFT USED ON BOTH SIDES FROM SUPERIOR GERMAN BIPLANES TO OUTDATED BRITISH 'PUSHERS'

ROYAL FLYING CORPS AIRCRAFT

## ROYAL AIRCRAFT FACTORY B.E.2

The B.E.2 was one of the first RFC aircraft deployed to France in 1914. It was militarily impractical as the pilot sat in the rear seat while the observer's view was obscured from the wing. By 1916 it was an unpopular aircraft due to its vulnerability and slow speed.

## AIRCO DE HAVILLAND D.H.2

Although flimsy in appearance the D.H.2 'pusher' biplane was manoeuvrable and initially had an excellent rate of climb. It was the RFC's first effective fighter and helped win back Allied air superiority in 1916 from the 'Fokker Scourge' but by 1917 it was past its prime and was vulnerable to German Albatros fighters.

## ROYAL AIRCRAFT FACTORY F.E.2

The F.E.2 was a unique aircraft in that both the pilot and observer sat in front of the propeller, with the pilot seated in the rear. Both crew members were armed with Lewis machine guns but by 1917, the aircraft was considered slow and dangerous to fly.

## ALBATROS D.II

Based on the Albatros D.I, the D.II was a superior aircraft with a powerful Mercedes engine, a top speed of 175km, a rate-of-climb of 3,280 feet in five minutes and two synchronised Spandau 7.92 machine guns. Manfred von Richthofen scored his first confirmed air kill in a red-coloured D.II.

## ALBATROS D.III

Similar in appearance to the D.II, the D.III had an improved high-altitude performance and an increased output of 170-175 horsepower. Its greater manoeuvrability was down to its new wing arrangement and it was generally considered to be easy and pleasant to fly. The D.III was the preminent fighter of Bloody April.

## HALBERSTADT D.II

In some ways the D.II was a predecessor to the Albatros series of aeroplanes. Introduced in late 1915, it was the first configuration fighter biplane in the Luftstreitkräfte and had a Mercedes D.II engine. However, its performance was similar to Eindecker monoplanes and only a few were in service during April 1917.

LUFTSTREITKRÄFTE AIRCRAFT

"MANFRED VON RICHTHOFEN  
SCORED HIS FIRST CONFIRMED AIR  
KILL IN A RED-COLOURED D.II"



# A LETHAL GAME-CHANGER



AVIATION HISTORIAN NORMAN FRANKS DISCUSSES WHAT EFFECT BLOODY APRIL HAD ON THE RFC, THE FRENCH AND THE RED BARON

## TO WHAT EXTENT DID BLOODY APRIL MAKE THE REPUTATION OF MANFRED VON RICHTHOFEN?

His Jasta (11) got the most victories during that month so it must have made some impact. He certainly had the

idea that you should always attack while being protected from behind but

he had other good pilots who such as Karl Emil Schäfer and his brother Lothar who had the nous to do the right jobs and shooting. It was certainly something that he took in his stride. When he joined the Jasta they had only had one victory in 4-5 months so his impact was almost immediate. He was much better than the previous leader of Jasta 11 who had just jogged along hoping for a quiet life.

## WHAT MADE THE GERMAN FIGHTERS SUPERIOR AIRCRAFT TO THEIR BRITISH COUNTERPARTS?

The Germans started to go over to biplanes such as the Fokker biplane and the Albatros D.I and D.II. They were quite superior and had twin-spanned machine guns whereas most of the RFC planes just had a single Vickers or Lewis gun at the front.

The Germans also always fought over their own side of the lines. That was something they got into because there were comparatively few aeroplanes around and nobody wanted to lose any. Nor did they want to give the secret away of firing through the propeller but eventually one German got lost and came down intact on the Allied side and they discovered how the interrupter gear worked.

The British did have the Sopwith Pup, which was a very nice, docile thing for chugging around the sky. Providing it had a good competent pilot it could see off most of the Germans but it only had a single machine gun. Ultimately, the RFC struggled until better aircraft came along in the late spring of 1917.

## DESPITE THE HIGH ALLIED LOSSES WHY WERE THE BRITISH AIR SUPPORT OPERATIONS OVER ARRAS LARGELY SUCCESSFUL?

The RFC were always pushing forward. Trenchard had this policy of saying, "Go and get them! Don't fly on our side of the lines when the Germans are remaining on theirs." They had to do artillery and photographic work and go over to the lines, which got them into trouble with the German fighters. Also, without radio there was a problem trying to contact the two-

seaters who were doing work for the various army corps so they had to fly patrols and hope that they would be in area if the Germans turned up to engage.

On the other hand the Germans would be sitting on their airfields having Schnapps and looking at front lines through their binoculars or telescopes. Frontline soldiers would ring up the airfield and say "They're coming over" and they could just take off and engage the enemy. The Germans were always in full control of the air pushing the Allied aircraft back across the lines.

## IN YOUR OPINION WHAT WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS THAT BOTH SIDES LEARNED FROM BLOODY APRIL AND DID IT CHANGE THEIR TACTICS?

That's a difficult one. I think it was just a matter of carrying on and trying to do better. The Sopwith Camel and S.E.5 were coming in the summer and they were much better aeroplanes to combat the Germans. By contrast the Albatros didn't really improve; they had the D.V and D.Va that was slightly better but it wasn't until the Fokker Triplane arrived in late September 1917 that they had a better aeroplane and even that had its limitations.

In terms of tactics, the RFC still had this old "Go over the other side and patrol" strategy and they lost a lot of men due to a lack of foresight and training. The British fighter pilots came out and filled the losses without any prior operational flying whatsoever. They were going in almost "sky blind" whereas the Germans had already been operational on two-seaters either as an observer or a pilot and had the nous to try and understand what was going on in the air.

## WHAT WAS THE FRENCH ROLE DURING BLOODY APRIL AND HOW EFFECTIVE WERE THEY?

They were supposed to be supporting the French part of the line because General Nivelle was supposed to be co-ordinating the attack on the Arras front but he didn't get his act together for some time. The British took the brunt of the Arras offensive but the French were still operating when Nivelle eventually got going.

They had good training and were better to a degree but they lost as much as anyone else. I wouldn't say they were better or worse, they were just different. They mostly had Nieuport scouts on the fighting side so they were already equipped with a good enough aeroplane. However, it says something when most of the good Jastas were opposite the British front and the lesser Jastas were opposite the French front. It seemed to be a bit easier to be pitted against the French rather the British.

advantage of the synchronised machine gun during the first period of German dominance in 1915 known as the 'Fokker Scourge'. The first air aces began to emerge, including Oswald Boelcke who became known as the 'Father of Air Fighting Tactics.' Boelcke was a leading voice in reorganising the air force after the Battle of the Somme and argued for the formation of new combat units known as 'Jagdstaffeln' (hunting squadrons). More commonly known as 'Jastas', these squadrons were not attached to ground units such as artillery but flew freely as needed. They did not patrol but fought in response to sightings of enemy aircraft, which they then hunted down.

All Jasta pilots were trained to follow the aerial manoeuvres of the 'Dicta Boelcke', a set of rules, which were developed by the ace himself. In eight succinct rules, Boelcke defined "aggressive aerial warfare" for the first time and its clinical analysis of air combat was



The wrecked remains of a French Nieuport XVII that was shot down by flak while attacking German balloons on 6 April. The body of the pilot, Second Lieutenant HS Pell, can be seen to the right

Leutnant Joachim von Bertrab made four kills on 6 April. This crashed Sopwith aircraft collided with another aircraft while under attack by Bertrab. The observer drowned in the water



## "THE GERMANS WOULD BE SITTING ON THEIR AIRFIELDS HAVING SCHNAPPS AND LOOKING AT FRONT LINES THROUGH THEIR BINOCULARS OR TELESCOPES."

Norman Franks is the co-author of *Bloody April 1917*, which will be published by Grub Street in April 2017. See page 95 for more details





groundbreaking. Some of his rules included "Always try to secure an advantageous position before attacking," "Try to place yourself between the sun and the enemy," "Do not fire the machine guns until the enemy is within range" and "Attack in principle in groups of four or six."

Perhaps the most sensible rule warned against bravado, "Foolish acts of bravery only bring death. The Jasta must fight as a unit with close teamwork between all pilots." Although this was common sense the Dicta Boelcke was pioneering and unproven but the Jastas would soon implement them with deadly accuracy.

Boelcke handpicked the pilots for his own Jasta (known as Jasta 2), and trained them on new superior Albatros aeroplanes. These aircraft now dominated the Jastas and although Boelcke was killed in a mid-air collision in October 1916, his legacy was passed on to his

protégé, Manfred von Richthofen, who would soon prove the superior airmanship of the Jastas against the British.

### The Battle of Arras

By early 1917, the Allies were preparing for another huge offensive on the Western Front. Collectively known as the Nivelle Offensive, the British were to divert German troops away from a major French push along the River Aisne in April and concentrate in the area east of Arras. Both the British and French air forces were ordered to provide aerial support, particularly in reconnaissance, artillery spotting, ground support and tactical bombing.

For their part, the Germans had withdrawn behind the formidable new defences of the Hindenburg Line. They also decided to keep their aircraft on their side of the front and consequently, they had an automatic advantage in air superiority.



**"FOOLISH ACTS OF BRAVERY ONLY BRING DEATH. THE JASTA MUST FIGHT AS A UNIT WITH CLOSE TEAMWORK BETWEEN ALL PILOTS"**



Left: Lothar von Richthofen was the younger brother of Manfred and a great ace in his own right with 40 victories during WWI. During Bloody April alone he shot down 15 aircraft



British machine gunners fire on German aircraft near Arras. During April 1917 the RFC was deployed to assist the British Army at the Battle of Arras

# THE ACES GALLERY

APRIL 1917 SAW THE EMERGENCE OF SEVERAL GERMAN ACES BUT IT WAS ALSO A SURPRISINGLY SUCCESSFUL MONTH FOR ALLIED PILOTS



### MANFRED VON RICHTHOFEN

Considered the 'ace of aces' of WWI with 80 confirmed victories the 'Red Baron' was an exceptionally formidable fighter pilot. Leading Jasta 11 throughout April 1917, his own statistics were impressive. Within his 20 victories that month were three on 13 April.

Richthofen had now surpassed his mentor Oswald Boelcke and his overall score increased from 32 to 52.



### OTTO BERNERT

Bernert began the war as an infantryman and a bayonet wound rendered his left arm virtually useless. He disguised his disability and became a pilot in 1916. Attached to Jasta 2, Bernert shot down four Allied aircraft

between 1-3 April 1917, and was awarded the Pour le Mérite on 23 April. He celebrated the next day by downing a record five British aircraft in 30 minutes.



### KARL EMIL SCHÄFER

Schäfer was initially a competent and brave infantryman and was awarded the Iron Cross (Second Class) in September 1914. He first saw flying service in 1916 and was impressive enough to be recruited into Richthofen's Jasta 11 in February 1917. Out of his

eventual 30 victories Schäfer won 15 during April 1917 and was awarded the Pour le Mérite shortly afterwards.



### ALBERT BALL

Probably the most famous British ace of WWI Ball transferred to the Royal Flying Corps from the Sherwood Foresters regiment and rapidly proved himself as a natural fighter pilot. Out of his 44 victories, three were

achieved between 23-28 April 1917 but he was beginning to display signs of mental exhaustion. Ball crashed to his death the following month and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.



### ROBERT A LITTLE

Little was Australia's highest-scoring fighter pilot of WWI with 47 confirmed victories. Joining the Royal Naval Air Service in 1915 he participated in numerous bombing raids before serving on the Western Front. He claimed his tenth victory on 24 April 1917 by forcing a German aircraft to land and took the pilot prisoner at gunpoint.



### WILLIAM BISHOP

Bishop was officially Canada's highest-scoring ace of WWI with 72 confirmed victories, although there is controversy about how many claims were genuine. Nevertheless April 1917 was a busy time for Bishop where he shot down 12 aircraft and was awarded the

Military Cross. On 30 April he also reportedly survived an encounter with Manfred von Richthofen.



## BLOODY APRIL

*This artist's depiction shows Albert Ball's last moments, shortly before his S.E.5a plummeted to the ground, May 1917*





**"THE BRITISH HAD NOT DEPLOYED ANY FIGHTERS MORE  
ADVANCED THAN THEY HAD FIELDIED IN 1916 AND COMBINED  
WITH THE PLUCKY BUT INEXPERIENCED RFC PILOTS, THE STAGE  
WAS SET FOR THE GRIMMEST AERIAL BLOODBATH OF THE WAR"**





On paper the two sides were not evenly matched. At the beginning of April, the RFC had 25 squadrons totalling 385 aircraft, of which between 120-130 were fighters. By contrast, the Germans only had five Jastas in the Arras region but as the month progressed their numbers grew to between 80-114 operational fighter aircraft. They were outnumbered but what they lacked in pilot numbers, they made up in quality aircraft.

The Germans had been training on already superior Albatros D.I aircraft in January 1917 but they were soon flying the improved variants of the D.II and particularly the D.III by April. While the D.II had set the standard for fighter aircraft, the D.III was considered easy to fly and would become the pre-eminent German fighter over the next month.

Against the Jastas the British could not compete. Most of their aircraft were vulnerable reconnaissance aeroplanes such as the B.E.2c

and F.E.2b. Meanwhile most fighter squadrons were equipped with inferior aircraft such as the Sopwith Strutter, Nieuport 17 and obsolete 'pusher' aircraft (engines with rear propellers) such as the DH.2 and F.E.8. The British did have fighters to compete with the Albatros, such as the Sopwith Pup, Triplane and SPAD S.VII, but their numbers were few and spread along the front. The British had not deployed any fighters more advanced than they had fielded in 1916 and combined with the plucky but inexperienced RFC pilots, the stage was set for the grimmest aerial bloodbath of the war.

### April showers

The Arras offensive began on 9 April 1917 and in its initial phases, the attack went well in several places. The Battle of Vimy Ridge and the First Battle of the Scarpe were great successes for British and Imperial troops but the same could not be said for the air war.

The RFC's troubles had been mounting even before April. In March the number of dead or missing airmen shot up to 143 from a previous high of 75 in October 1916. This worried the commander of the RFC, Major General Hugh Trenchard, who was aware of the shortcomings of his aircraft. He knew that the increased aggression of the Germans threatened Allied air superiority but he was also hampered by his own offensive strategy that required constant attacks over enemy territory. He raised concerns to the overall British commander on the Western Front Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig who in turn alerted the War Cabinet about the RFC's predicament. However, the new S.E.5a and Bristol Fighter F.2a fighters were not ready for deployment and so the RFC had to make do with their outdated aircraft.

The result was an aerial bloodbath. During April, the Germans shot down 275 British aircraft and the aircrew casualty rate was even

**"THE BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE AND THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE SCARPE WERE GREAT SUCCESSES FOR BRITISH AND IMPERIAL TROOPS BUT THE SAME COULD NOT BE SAID FOR THE AIR WAR"**

*Right: Anton Fokker designed successful aircraft for the German armed forces during WWI including Eindecker monoplanes, the D.VII biplane and the famous Dr.1 triplane*

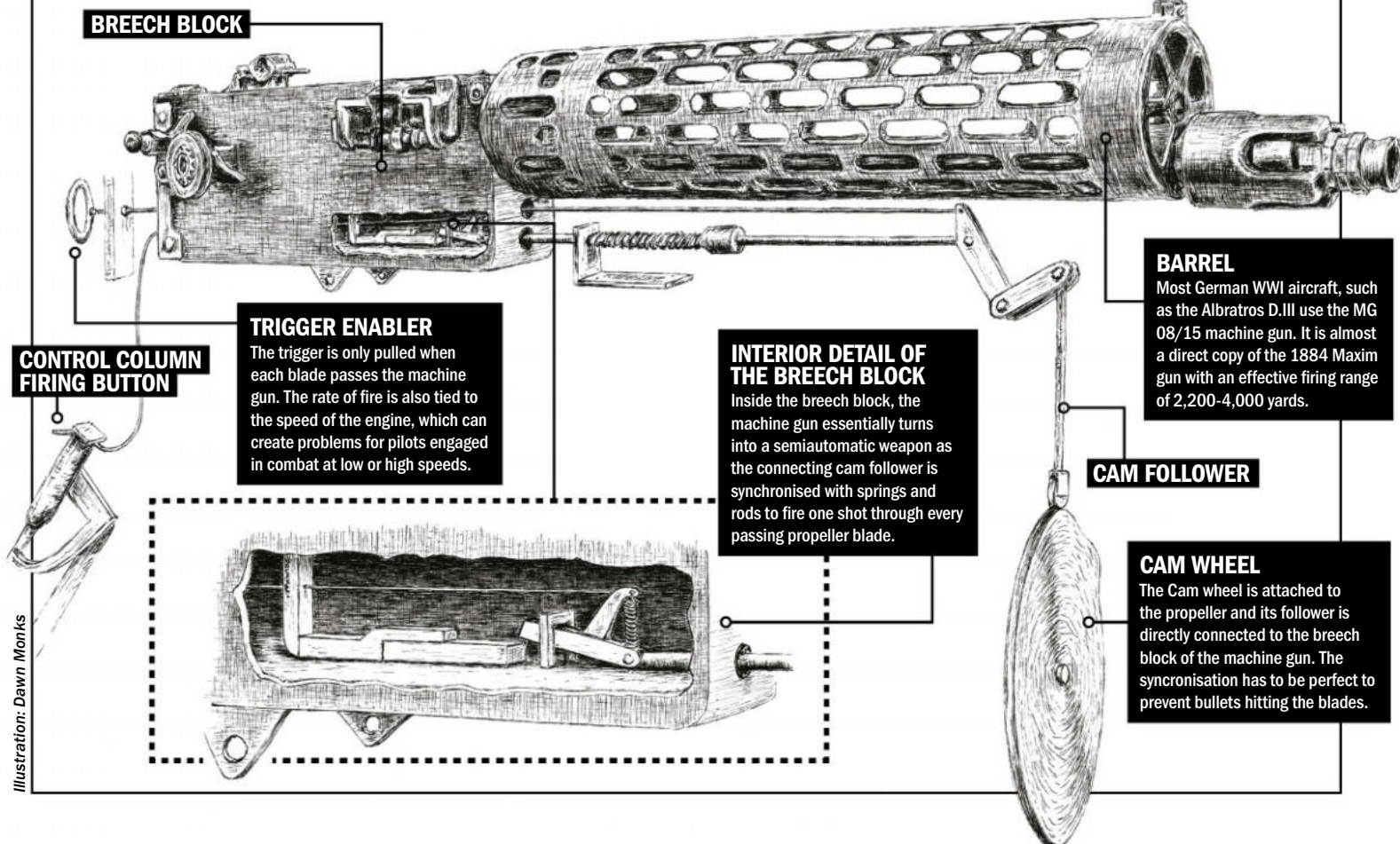


## THE INTERRUPTER GEAR

THIS INGENIOUS PIECE OF AERONAUTICAL ENGINEERING GAVE THE IMPERIAL GERMAN AIR SERVICE AN INITIAL EDGE IN WWI AND CHANGED THE COURSE OF AERIAL WARFARE

Although he did not entirely invent the interrupter gear, the Dutch-born German aircraft manufacturer Anton Fokker improved on the 'deflector gear' in 1915. The improved gear was a timing mechanism where an aircraft's machine gun could only fire

through the front propeller. If it passed directly in front of the gun it would stop firing. The gear made aerial gunnery much more accurate and safer for German pilots. Remarkably, Fokker is said to have designed the interrupter gear in only 48 hours.





Left: Most famously known as the 'Blue Max' the Pour le Mérite was Germany's highest military award. Many were issued to German ace pilots in the aftermath of Bloody April

Jasta 11's flight line of Albatros D.Vs at Roucourt in 1917. Although the photo was taken after Bloody April it shows Manfred von Richthofen's red Albatros D.III, which is second from the front



**"THE RESULT WAS AN AERIAL BLOODBATH. DURING APRIL THE GERMANS SHOT DOWN 275 BRITISH AIRCRAFT AND THE AIRCREW CASUALTY RATE WAS EVEN WORSE"**



worse. More than 200 British airmen were killed as well as 54 additional French. The Germans eventually claimed the destruction of 298 Allied aircraft plus 34 balloons while suffering known losses of 76 aircraft and 24 dead, wounded or missing personnel.

The chief architects of this carnage was Boelcke's old squadron Jasta 2 and Jasta 11, which was commanded by Richthofen. Jasta 2 shot down 21 British aircraft in April and although Franz Walz led it, the glory went to its young pilots including 19 year-old Werner Voss who added two victories to his previous 22 in the first week of April. He was awarded Germany's highest military honour, the Pour le Mérite, on 8 April and went on a propaganda publicity tour around Germany, but his victories set the tone for a successful month.

Jasta 11 in particular rampaged through the skies during April and accounted for 89 of the German victories. This German success was even more remarkable because there were only seven serviceable aircraft per Jasta and only a maximum of eight squadrons during April.

For their part, the British floundered. In seven days alone between 8-14 April, the RFC lost 47

aircraft, of which 31 fell behind German lines. Morale between the soldiers consequently suffered, particularly as the day-to-day accounts of the fighting were published in the *Weekly Communiqué*, which was nicknamed the 'Comic Cuts'.

Nevertheless, the British performance was not a total disaster. The RFC continued to support the army during the ultimately successful Arras offensive and provided aerial photographs, reconnaissance information and bombing raids. The offensive was successful and the RFC was far from destroyed, despite the heavy losses they sustained. The Germans themselves enabled this by fighting defensively behind their own lines. Consequently, while the Germans had air superiority, it was the Allies who retained air supremacy.

### Lessons to be learned

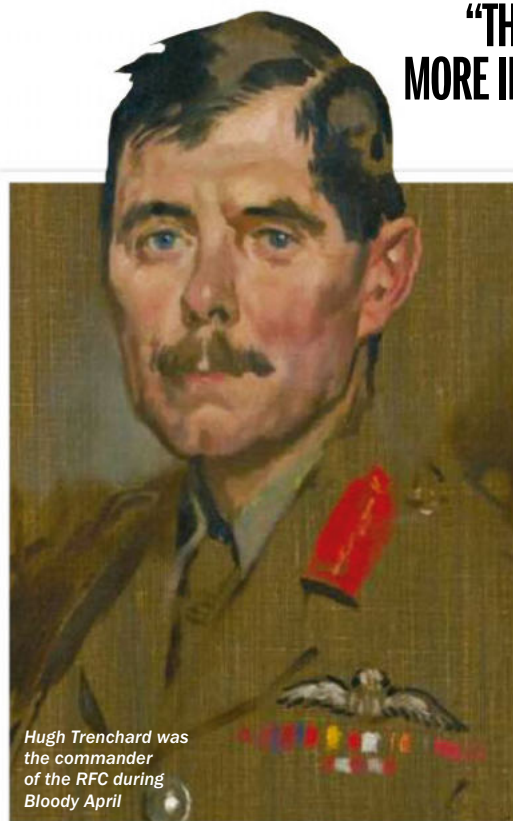
April 1917 had been a bitter month for the British but their difficulties continued. Over the broader period of March-May 1917, the RFC lost around 1,270 aircraft and the lessons that were learned were hard but ultimately beneficial. By 10 June, Trenchard was forced

to instruct his brigade commanders, "...to avoid wastage of both pilots and machines, for some little time. My reserves at present are dangerously low, in fact, in some cases, it barely exists at all." Nonetheless, in the same instruction he also was keen to fortify morale: "It is of the utmost importance, however, that the offensive spirit is maintained."

To achieve this the British recognised that skilled pilots in good aircraft were more important than numerical superiority. Improved pilot training schools with experienced instructors soon appeared and by the summer more advanced fighters, like the S.E.5a and the Sopwith Camel, quickly gained ascendancy over the now stretched Jastas. The situation now reversed as RFC losses generally fell while German casualties rose.

Therefore in context, Bloody April was arguably the pinnacle of German air superiority and a remarkable achievement for an outnumbered aerial force. Nevertheless, for all their prowess, the Jastas failed to destroy the RFC and its determined resurgence eventually led to the creation of an even more formidable flotilla: the Royal Air Force.

**"THE BRITISH RECOGNISED THAT SKILLED PILOTS IN GOOD AIRCRAFT WERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY. IMPROVED PILOT TRAINING SCHOOLS WITH EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS SOON APPEARED"**



Hugh Trenchard was the commander of the RFC during Bloody April



Captain Albert Ball in the cockpit of his S.E.5a fighter in late April 1917. Ball was a successful British ace but he had less than a fortnight to live after this photograph was taken

Images: Alamy, Mary Evans, Thinkstock

**Below: A line up of Sopwith Pups of 66 Squadron at Vert Galand, France. The nearest aircraft to the camera 'A6152' was shot up in combat on 24 April 1917**





**SPARTAN WARRIOR**



**ROMAN BATTLE DRILL**



**SCOTS GUARDS ON PARADE**



**HAND CARVED MAHOGANY LANCASTER IN 1/32 SCALE**



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# INKERMAN

A grand Russian assault takes on the tenacious ranks of British defenders to raise the siege of Sevastopol

WORDS WILLIAM E WELSH

## SEVASTOPOL, RUSSIA 5 NOVEMBER 1854

**S**ensing they were on the verge of victory, several hundred British soldiers charged down the eastern slope of Inkerman Ridge at mid-morning on 5 November 1854, with large numbers of routed Russian infantry before them. Just a few minutes earlier, the British had repulsed what seemed to be their last attack against a hotly contested position known as the Sandbag Battery.

After the position changed hands several times following the Russians' surprise attack at dawn, George, the Duke of Cambridge

arrived at the Sandbag Battery after a forced march with his Guards Brigade to reinforce elements of the British Second and Fourth divisions defending the strongpoint. To the north and east, the Russians were in full flight. Bodies of fallen soldiers slain by Minié rifles at point-blank range or bayoneted in the abdomen lay stacked up like cordwood around the nine-foot-high parapet.

Those Russians who survived the slaughter had thrown down their weapons and laid themselves before the British, wailing for mercy. Victory hung in the air.

Many of the British at the forward outpost pursued the retreating Russians. However, once they ascended into the valley, the Russian drums and bugles sounded the call for a fresh attack on the heights to their rear. Although the fog partially obscured the view uphill, they saw fresh waves of Russians engulf the Sandbag Battery.

The British had sorely miscalculated, and they would pay a heavy price for their folly. Those who had chased the Russians prematurely began climbing the slopes from where they had come. Grim-faced soldiers who had tasted a few precious drops of victory just minutes before now hoped to slip past the Russians in the fog to the safety of the British breastworks on Home Ridge. The fight on Inkerman Ridge was far from over.

*Fourth Division Commander Major General George Cathcart is mortally wounded just as his troops launch a bayonet attack against the Russians*

### OPPOSING FORCES



VS



#### BRITISH & FRENCH

**LEADERS** FitzRoy Somerset, Lord Raglan; Brigadier General John L Pennefather  
**INFANTRY** 16,000  
**GUNS** 34

#### RUSSIAN

**LEADERS** General Prince Alexander Menshikov; Lieutenant General Peter Andreivich Dannenberg  
**INFANTRY** 35,000 men  
**GUNS** 134





### Tsar demands attack

Like a shark that smells blood in the water, Tsar Nicholas I had watched the decline of the Ottoman Turks to his south with a keen interest. Hoping to further degrade the Turks' hold on the Balkans, in 1853 he proclaimed his right to protect the 12 million Orthodox Christians still living under the Turkish yoke in that region. But the French and English, who tried to maintain a balance of power in Europe and Asia that favoured their political and trade interests, interceded on behalf of what was dubbed 'the sick man of Europe'.

Turkish decline in the Balkans, as well as central Asia and Siberia, challenged western European interests in India and China. Nicholas issued an ultimatum to Ottoman

Sultan Abdulmecid I in March 1853. Nicholas's emissary Prince Alexander Menshikov gave the sultan eight days to acknowledge Russia as protector of the Orthodox Christians. However, when the sultan refused, Russian soldiers invaded the Balkans in July 1853. After their diplomatic intervention failed, Britain and France girded for war against Russia.

The Allies believed the best way to halt Russian aggression in the region was to capture the Russian naval base at Sevastopol, located on western tip of the Crimean Peninsula.

With that lofty objective in mind, they landed on the west coast of the Crimea in mid-September and marched on Sevastopol. Fearing his army would be trapped in the port city, General Prince Alexander Menshikov marched out of the base with the majority of his forces in order to retain his ability to manoeuvre against the British and the French. The Allies, who benefited from naval superiority, secured the port of Balaclava and repulsed a Russian attempt to capture it on 25 October.

Time was not on the Russians' side. When Tsar Nicholas learned that the Allies planned to substantially reinforce their army in the Crimea, he sent his sons, Grand Princes Michael and Nicholas, not only to boost the army's morale but also to prod Menshikov into launching a fresh attack that would defeat the Allies before they were reinforced. The Allies were ripe for such an attack because they did not have enough forces on hand to completely invest Sevastopol, as well as protect Balaclava and

the supply corridor between the two points. The French held the siege lines west of the city and the British manned those to its east.

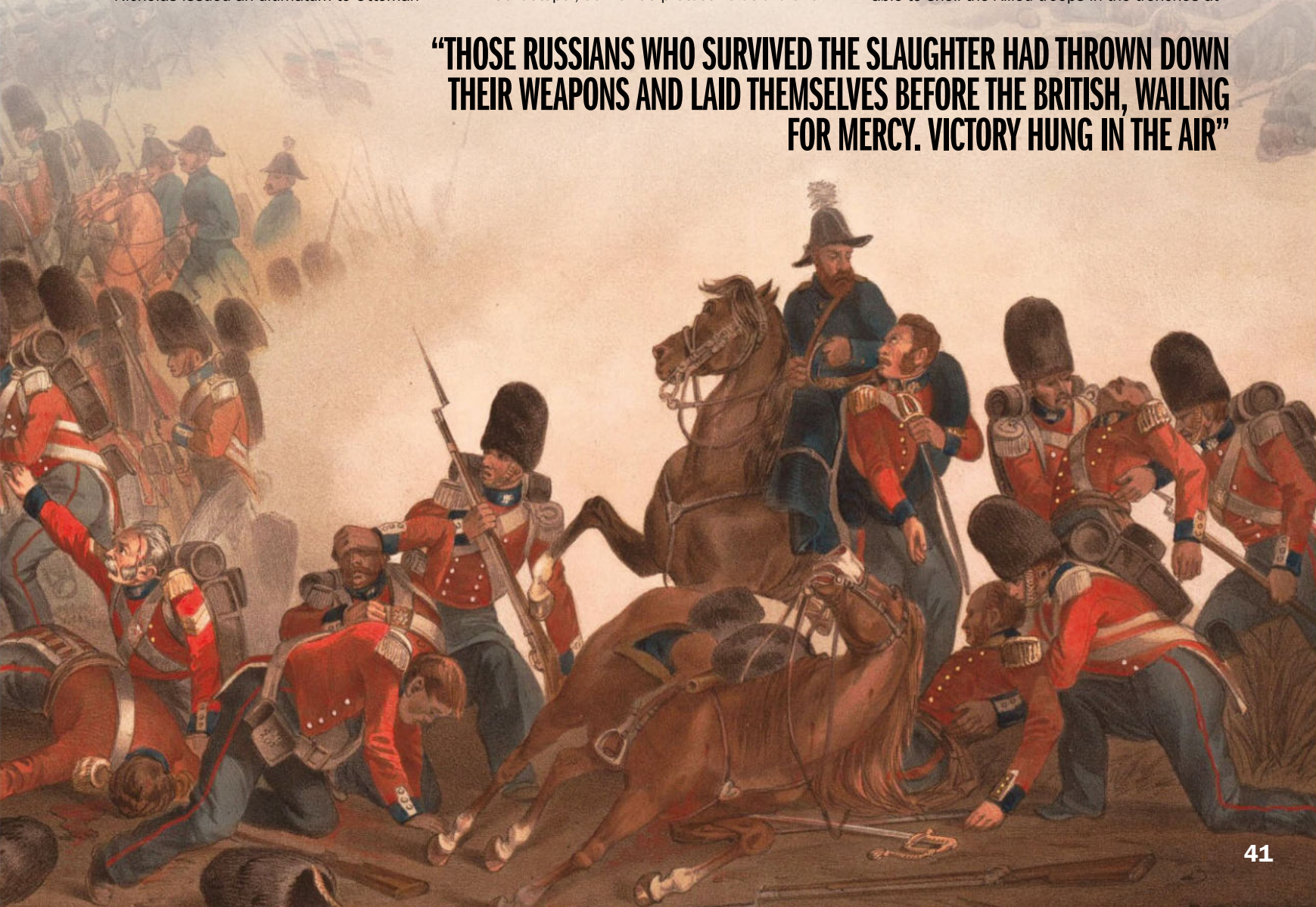
The Russians managed to maintain a corridor connecting the city with the interior of the Crimean peninsula by way of a road that ran parallel to Sevastopol's eastern roadstead. The Russians were able to do this because the guns of their ships, bottled up in the harbour by the Allied navies, were able to cover the northern extremity of Inkerman Ridge.

### Reinforcements arrive

The Russians conducted a reconnaissance in force against the British Second Division, which anchored the right flank of the Allied army, on the afternoon of 26 October in a clash that became known afterwards as Little Inkerman. Lieutenant General George de Lacy Evans, commander of the division, conducted a masterful defence by drawing the Russians into the teeth of massed artillery that broke up their attack.

To strengthen Menshikov's army in preparation for the large-scale attack, Nicholas ordered two Russian divisions from the Balkans to the Crimea. The Russian 10th and 11th divisions arrived from Bessarabia on 2 November. In compliance with the Tsar's wishes, Menshikov planned to send these two divisions, as well as another already at Sevastopol, against the British Second Division on the morning of 5 November. Once the British had been driven off the ridge, the Russians would be able to shell the Allied troops in the trenches at

**"THOSE RUSSIANS WHO SURVIVED THE SLAUGHTER HAD THROWN DOWN THEIR WEAPONS AND LAID THEMSELVES BEFORE THE BRITISH, WAILING FOR MERCY. VICTORY HUNG IN THE AIR"**





*The Grenadier Guards stand tall with their tattered colours, after helping the Second Division hold Inkerman Ridge in the face of fearsome odds*





*The Commander of the British Light Division, Lieutenant General Sir George Brown (1790 - 1865) and his staff*



*Left: Colonel Edward Birch Reynardson commanded the 3rd Grenadier Guards during the Battle of Inkerman, here he poses for a photo about a year after the battle*



Sevastopol, which would make the Allied siege works indefensible.

Lieutenant General Fedor Ivanovich Soimonov's 10th Corps would advance from Sevastopol to assault De Lacy Evans's troops, while Lieutenant General P Ya Pavlov's 11th Corps would attack from the Tchernaya Valley. The Combined 16th/17th Division would be split between Soimonov and Pavlov.

The Russians would ascend the ridge from steep ravines on both sides that would largely mask their approach. Once the two columns merged on Inkerman Ridge, Russian Lieutenant General Peter Dannenberg would direct the attack. To prevent Allied reinforcements on the south end of the ridge coming to the Second Division's aid, Russian Lieutenant General Gorchakov was to make a strong feint with his 22,000-strong corps on the Inkerman Plain to the east. This included the Duke of Cambridge's Guards Brigade and Major General Pierre Bosquet's division.

While the British infantry were motivated volunteers, the Russians were conscripts with little training. Also unlike the British, the Russians preferred to fight with the bayonet rather than trade volleys with their opponents. Their outdated muskets were only accurate to 150 yards and had a top range of 300 yards. In contrast, the British Minié rifles were deadly accurate at 300 yards and effective at up to 1,000 yards.

The rugged terrain over which the Russians would attack heavily favoured the defending British. It consisted of rocky ravines

and hills that were covered with thick brush and blister-like rocky protrusions. In the days leading up to the offensive, steady rains had soaked the landscape, turning barren patches into muddy morasses and making the rocks so slippery it was near impossible to get a solid footing on them.

An important command change had taken place in the Second Division as a result of an unforeseen development following Little Inkerman. De Lacy Evans had suffered a severe fall from his horse, meaning command devolved to Brigadier General John L Pennefather, commander of the division's first brigade. A general with an abundance of experience leading troops in India, he liked to fight from the front and keep close tabs on those under his command as the battle developed.

### **A soldier's battle**

Soimonov's 19,000-man corps was on the move before dawn on 5 November. His troops marched in a drizzling rain south east through the Careenage Ravine that paralleled Inkerman Ridge to the west. A thick fog concealed them from the sharp eyes of British pickets. Pennefather had half a dozen picquets, which were forward outposts, each manned by a company of 100 soldiers, arrayed 500 yards north of his main position.

The grey-uniformed Russian infantry ascended the slippery ridge at 5.45am. They charged with fixed bayonets, yelling at the top of their lungs as they struck the picquets. "The Russians came on with the most fiendish yells you can imagine," said a captain with the 41st (Welch) Regiment.



## GREAT BATTLES

British riflemen at isolated picquets tried their best to stem the onslaught, but many found their cartridges were too damp and they could not fire their rifles. The situation was chaotic; the fog made it nearly impossible for either side to see what was happening. "We could see no further than a few feet ahead of us," said a Russian captain. Soimonov had an early success when his troops captured Shell Hill from a picquet manned by the 41st Regiment.

Although the fog cloaked the Russian attack, it ultimately had a negative effect on both sides. For one, the mist made it impossible for officers commanding battalions and companies to know the precise location of their troops and monitor their performance. Additionally, it became impossible to rally them if they became disheartened. As a consequence, during the morning it often fell to groups of soldiers to make decisions that ordinarily would be made for them by their officers. For this reason, Inkerman is known as a 'soldier's battle'.

While the Russian artillerists hauled their guns into position atop Shell Hill, Pennefather sent eight companies forward to reinforce the picquets. Rather than order the companies to fall back to the division's main line at Home Ridge, he sought to slow the momentum of the Russian attack until reinforcements could arrive. The stalwart British riflemen fought back from behind rock outcroppings and scrub thickets.

The Second Division benefitted from a defence in depth. Shell Hill and the picquets formed the outer belt. The middle belt consisted of a field fortification position known as 'the barrier' in the centre and the Sandbag Battery on the far right. The inner belt was the fortified Home Ridge astride the Post Road, which ran along the spine of Inkerman Ridge. All the British field guns were deployed behind embrasures at Home Ridge; therefore the Sandbag Battery had no guns on the day of battle.

Of the 8,500 British at Sevastopol, more than half were positioned on Inkerman Ridge and adjacent ridges to the south. As soon as he realised that a major attack was under way, Pennefather sent requests to the British Guards Brigade, 4th Division and Light Division requesting immediate assistance.

Pennefather desperately needed help because by that time, Pavlov's 16,000-strong corps had bridged the Tchernaya River and was ascending Inkerman Ridge from three points. The Russians then pressed their attack against the British forces on a 1,000-yard front that stopped them from bringing the full weight of their numbers. Lieutenant General Sir George Brown, the commander of the 4th Division, arrived during the second hour of the battle with his

**Left:** The rifle cartridge, or Minié ball, used by the Pattern 1853 Enfield caused large wounds and could shatter bone on impact

### SEVASTOPOL

#### 01 CHURCH BELLS RINGING

The bells of Sevastopol's churches began ringing at 9pm on the night before the attack to raise the morale of the Russian troops as they prepared to march into battle. The bell ringing helped to cover the sounds of the army's preparations; most importantly, the rumble of the limbered artillery.

#### 02 THE BIG GUNS

Russian ships lay anchored in Sevastopol's roadstead, and their big guns controlled the northern end of Inkerman Ridge, which prevented the British army from occupying the entire ridge and shutting off access to Sevastopol via the Sapper Road which paralleled the roadstead.

### SOLMONOV

### VICTORIA RIDGE

## BLOODY REPULSE ON THE RIDGE 1854

THE BRITISH TACTIC OF REINFORCING THEIR OUTPOSTS SLOWED THE MOMENTUM OF THE RUSSIAN JUGGERNAUT AND BOUGHT PRECIOUS TIME FOR REINFORCEMENTS TO ARRIVE AND SHORE UP THE MAIN POSITION ON THE RIDGE

### CAREENAGE RAVINE

### LIGHT DIVISION CAMP

"THOSE RUSSIANS BEHIND THE BRITISH LINE WHO REFUSED TO SURRENDER WERE CUT DOWN WHERE THEY STOOD"



## INKERMAN BRIDGE

### 08 GRIPPED BY PANIC

When Russian buglers sounded a retreat at 12pm, many of the Russian infantrymen panicked. They streamed north towards the aqueduct that ran along the roadstead or east to the Tchernaya River. Nearby Allied units fired into the backs of the fleeing soldiers to inflict as many casualties as possible.

## SHELL HILL

### 03 BRIDGE SLIP UP

A naval detachment instructed to repair the bridge across Tchernaya River during the night preceding the attack failed to undertake the task as instructed. Pioneers laboured furiously at first light of day to complete the task, and Pavlov's division arrived two hours behind schedule as a result.

## TCHERNAYA RIVER

### 04 KNOCKED OVER LIKE BOWLING PINS

The Russian officers trained their infantry to fight in deep formations known as battalion columns. The British artillery raked the tightly packed formations inflicting greater casualties than if the battalions had deployed on a wider front.

## FORE RIDGE

## GUARDS REGIMENTS

## HOME RIDGE

## 2ND DIVISION CAMP

### 05 DUKE GEORGE'S BRUSH WITH DEATH

George, Duke of Cambridge led his Guards Brigade to reinforce the Sandbag Battery where he had his horse shot from under him. With only 100 men left, he was prepared to fight to the death against overwhelming odds, but his aides convinced him to withdraw.

### 06 SIEGE GUNS ARE HAULED INTO POSITION

Lord Raglan ordered two 18-pounder guns from the British siege train brought forward to support the British infantry. After a mix-up in which they were taken to the wrong location, they went into action in the late morning inflicting frightening casualties on the Russians and knocking out many of their guns.

## GUARDS CAMP

### 07 LAST LINE OF DEFENCE

French Chasseurs d'Afrique rode down groups of Russians who had slipped through the British lines. Those Russians behind the British line who refused to surrender were cut down where they stood.





six regiments. Concerned about his left flank, Pennefather directed him to send a substantial portion of those troops to support elements of the 47th (Lancashire) Regiment, which was heavily engaged with the 3,300-strong Ekaterinburg Regiment.

### **“They came on like ants”**

After the first two hours of battle, Pennefather's strategy was working to perfection. Although there seemed to be no end to the battalion and company columns of Russians that emerged from the fog, the formidable firepower of the British riflemen resulted in heaps of dead wherever they attacked.

With the addition of Pavlov's guns, the Russians had upwards of 100 pieces in action on Shell Hill and adjacent ground. Russian shells whistled overhead and exploded, sending deadly shrapnel into the thin British ranks. The principal regiments manning the barrier and the Sandbag Battery were Pennefather's 30th (Cambridge) Regiment and 41st Regiment, respectively. Four battalions from the Lakoutsk Regiment forced the Cambridge troops, who were low on ammunition, to withdraw to the Home Ridge. Meanwhile, Russians from the Okhotsk and Seleginsk regiments repeatedly stormed the Sandbag Battery. Hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets and clubbed muskets occurred as the Russians swarmed over the battery.

The enemy charges broke over the parapet like waves of a storm-tossed sea against a rockbound headland. Pavlov continued to feed fresh troops against the Sandbag Battery. The Russian commanders failed to realise that the position contained little strategic value and their main effort should have been directed toward punching through Pennefather's Home Ridge breastworks. Brigadier General CB Adams fed reinforcements from his brigade of the Second Division into the fight to bolster the hard-pressed Welch riflemen. Adams was nearly slain by the thrust of a Russian bayonet, but Sergeant George Walters blocked the blow in time.

The Sandbag position changed hands several times during the prolonged Russian onslaught. Pavlov continued to feed fresh men into the fight in a bid to capture the Sandbag position. “They came on like ants,” wrote a British private with the 49th (Hertfordshire) Regiment. Some British soldiers who exhausted their ammunition clobbered the Russians who got inside the battery with stones. The din of battle swelled to new heights. Shells crashed, bullets zipped, buglers and drummers announced fresh attacks and men yelled and screamed at the top of their lungs. The Russians seemed to have won the isolated fight when fresh British reinforcements came rushing up the Post Road at 8.00am.

Lieutenant General Cathcart brought elements of his 4th Division, which were armed with

outdated percussion smoothbore muskets, to assist Pennefather. Brigadier General Thomas Goldie led eight companies from his brigade forwards to bolster the centre. They rushed towards the barrier just in time to check the advance of the Lakoutsk Regiment. By now, the Okhotsk Regiment had captured the Sandbag Battery having driven out Pennefather's troops.

The Duke of Cambridge, who had arrived on the field with 1,300 Guards in three regiments, launched his crack troops against the Russian left in a bid to retake the Sandbag Battery. Advancing side by side, the 3rd Grenadier Guards and the 1st Coldstream Guards came charging downhill from high ground on the Fore Ridge into the disorganised Russian ranks. They swept the Guards over the lip of a projection known as the Kitspur, sending many of them tumbling into Saint Clement's Ravine.

The Guards were sucked into the vortex of battle at the Sandbag Battery. Each time a fresh column of Russians attacked, the Guards fired into their ranks and then gave them cold steel. The position changed hands four times during the course of the next hour, but the Guards's numbers dwindled as the hour wore on.

At about the same time the Guards arrived, French Major General Pierre Bosquet arrived with the vanguard of his division. He held his position on Sapoune Heights to the south until he was satisfied that Gorchakov was not going to launch



*Left: British cavalry fiercely clash with Russian artillerymen and the countering Russian horsemen*



## “THE ENEMY CHARGES BROKE OVER THE PARAPET LIKE WAVES OF A STORM-TOSSED SEA AGAINST A ROCKBOUND HEADLAND”

a major assault against his position. Marching to Pennefather’s aid, he was astonished when two British officers told him his troops were not needed. Bosquet then stationed his men behind the British right just in case they were required.

### Spirited counterattacks

Raglan and Pennefather watched the Russian assaults against the British centre with alarm. Raglan sent an aide to Cathcart instructing him to take six companies from his second brigade held in reserve and deploy them between the barrier and the Sandbag Battery to plug a gaping hole in the British line.

Cathcart had plans of his own – he spied elements of the Seleginsk Regiment advancing unchecked in the valley east of Inkerman Ridge. He sent his men charging downhill against the Russian flanking force. It was a foolish move. Once they arrived on the lower ground, the men of the Fourth Division realised they were heavily outnumbered. A Russian sharpshooter fired a shot that struck Cathcart in his head, and he tumbled to the ground, mortally wounded. Bosquet wasted no time and ordered his troops forwards to shore up the British right flank.

The British also faced a major crisis at in their centre. Dannenberg massed 12 battalions for a major assault against the Home Ridge. Four battalions of the Lakoutsk Regiment spearheaded the attack. Major General Charles Denis Bourbaki led his French rifles forward to meet the attack and they blunted some of its force; however, small groups of Russians penetrated the Allied main line and made it to the south slope of Inkerman Ridge.

At the Home Ridge emplacements, the Russians captured three guns belonging to Captain John Turner’s G Battery of the Royal Artillery but thankfully, a small force of French Zouaves deployed nearby launched a spirited counterattack that recovered the guns. The Russian gunners worked furiously on Shell Hill in a concerted effort to break the British centre. In response, Pennefather cobbled together four regiments from his own division and other British divisions to hold Home Ridge.

The arrival of the French disheartened Dannenberg. Although he had a total of 12,000 reserves available with which he could continue the fight, the growing strength of the Allied force led him to doubt whether or not he could make

any further progress. He ordered a retreat at 12pm – both Menshikov and the grand princes protested vehemently, but Dannenberg was unshakeable in his resolve. When the buglers sounded a retreat, many of the Russian soldiers panicked and fled east towards the Tchernaya River rather than west to Sevastopol.

Over the course of five hours of heavy fighting, the Russian forces suffered around 12,000 casualties, whereas the Allies lost about 4,300. Because of their losses, the Allies had to wait for reinforcements to arrive in order to resume offensive actions. The Russian high command, which was already pessimistic about its chances to force the Allies to lift the siege, became even gloomier in their outlook.

Hard battles lay ahead the following year, but Queen Victoria’s soldiers at Sevastopol knew that they were capable of immense feats as their eventual victory in September 1855 proved.

## FURTHER READING

- ★ **THE CRIMEAN WAR: A HISTORY** BY ORLANDO FIGES
- ★ **INKERMAN 1854: THE SOLDIERS’ BATTLE** BY PATRICK MERCER
- ★ **THE GREAT CRIMEAN WAR: 1854-1856** BY TREVOR ROYLE
- ★ **THE BRITISH FIELD MARSHALLS 1736-1997** BY TA HEATHCOTE

Images: Alamy, Getty



# ORIGINS <sup>OF THE</sup> IDF

WORDS RICHARD WILLIS

Out of the chaos of WWII emerged not only a new state, but a military body that would become one of the most professional armed forces in the world

**F**ollowing Israel's Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's first formal order was to announce the establishment of an official army for the new nation – the Israeli Defence Force. This organisation combined several military groupings and militia and went on to acquire a status and level of superiority to rank as one of the world's most effective fighting forces.

Membership of the IDF included not only armed personnel from Jewish military groups active during World War II, but also Europeans who had survived the atrocities of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. In 1948, the IDF superseded all other Jewish armed forces. However, the transformation of a series of disorganised underground militias to the formation of a national defence corps was a complex and haphazard affair. Various activists had to be compelled into unification, and to accept the importance of

forming a single state entity to defend Israel and its borders. The newly created Israeli government recognised the need to absorb and consolidate the armed elements that had operated during the years of the Mandate, when there was administrative and political control imposed by the British. The IDF then came about after the dismantling of all other Jewish armed forces.

The unravelling of events prior to Ben-Gurion's first order indicates that the formation of the IDF pre-dated a military struggle, at the centre of which was the Haganah – a Zionist military organisation that sought to repel Arab forces in Palestine and to defend Jewish settlements. Underpinning what in its early days was a 'softer' approach, the Haganah emphasised an adherence to principles of 'self-restraint'.

## **A motley group**

While the Haganah itself operated before the outbreak of war in 1939, the origins of the IDF can be traced back more than 100 years. Modern Jewish settlements in Palestine were around in the 1870s and their safety depended on protection against bandits and

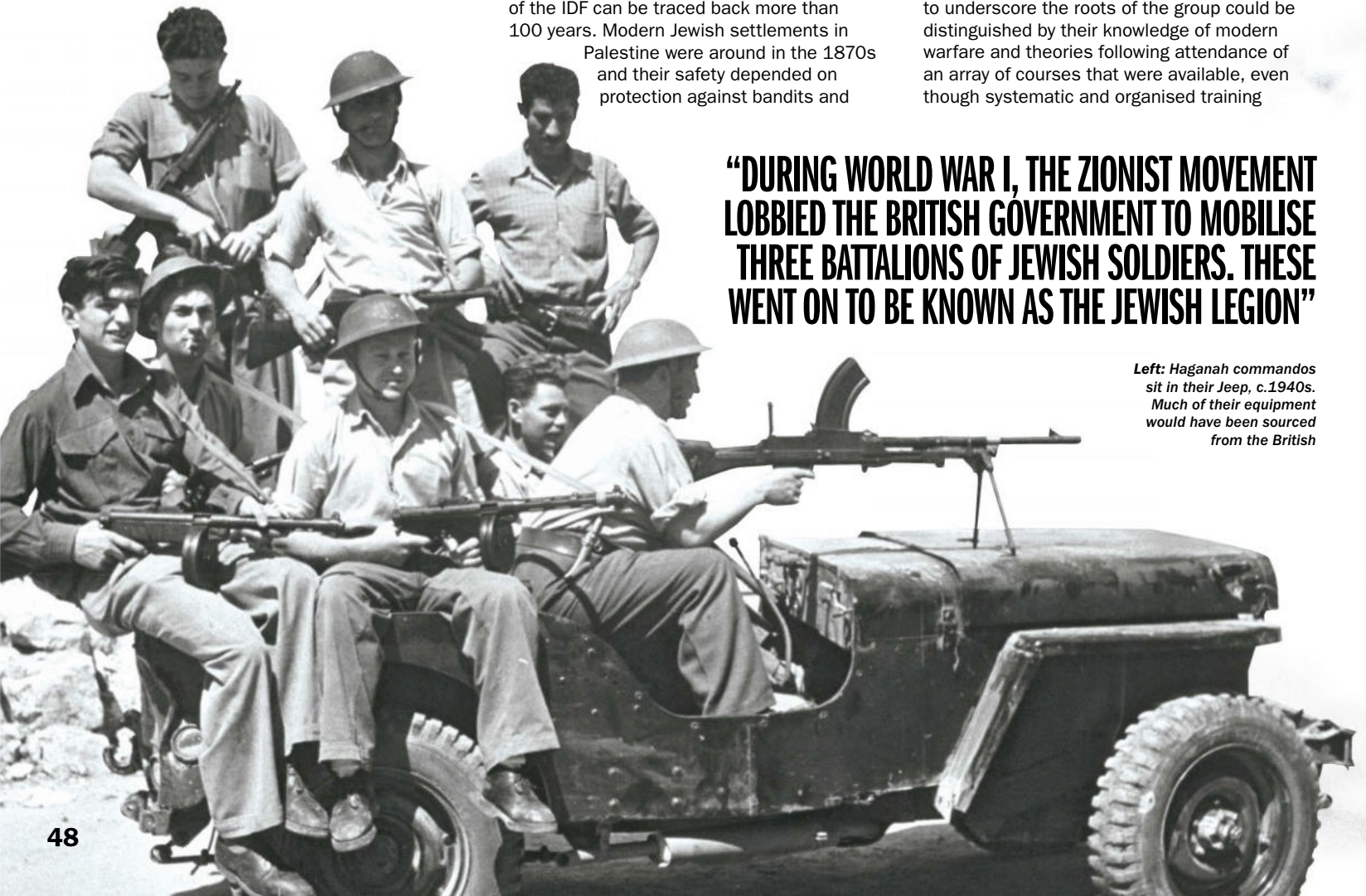
thieves. At the beginning of the 20th century, these settlers increasingly drew upon the services of vigilantes to protect their colonies, and established self-defence units. These, often found in the north of Israel, consisted of a motley collection of inexperienced and unprofessional men and women.

During World War I, the Zionist Movement lobbied the British government to mobilise three battalions of Jewish soldiers. These went on to be known as the Jewish Legion, which itself was followed by the introduction of other splinter groups such as the First Judean Battalion. The desire for autonomy, in order to deter external threats, culminated in the creation of the Haganah. In the run-up to its formation, the Jews adopted an ideological commitment to counter the rise of anti-Semitism since the 1920s.

Those Jews who joined the Haganah received training and were supportive of Zionist principles. The military units that were to underscore the roots of the group could be distinguished by their knowledge of modern warfare and theories following attendance of an array of courses that were available, even though systematic and organised training

**“DURING WORLD WAR I, THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT LOBBIED THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO MOBILISE THREE BATTALIONS OF JEWISH SOLDIERS. THESE WENT ON TO BE KNOWN AS THE JEWISH LEGION”**

*Left: Haganah commandos sit in their Jeep, c.1940s. Much of their equipment would have been sourced from the British*





programmes proved difficult to run. The effective use of tuition was also limited, as personnel had to be in place all over Palestine and could not be detracted from their primary military role. Yet evidence of such training among the Haganah troops, albeit on a minor scale, is available as far back as the mid-1920s when, for example, 20 men attended a commanders' course in the woods on Mount Carmel, near to Haifa.

In 1941, similar programmes were still held: at Juara, for example, an isolated district near to Esdraelon where several future IDF chiefs of staff attended. Other training was sporadic yet often entailed intensive tutelage in sniping, reconnaissance and explosives. Such military education was not really tolerated by the British, but the Palestinian Jews ignored any unwanted criticism.

The outbreak of WWII prompted the fragmented Jewish defence groups to bring about better organisational cohesion, though these changes were not as pronounced as was the case after 1945. Even so, during the war, Haganah reorganised and several fringe groups split into a number of self-defence forces. At the outset, the British made it clear that it wanted Palestinian Jews to engage with them and to join in the fight within their existing armed forces. These Jews attached themselves to the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and other recognised branches of the British military. There were even units composed solely of Palestinian Jews, and of Arabs and Jews, such as the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps which was quickly despatched to France in 1940.

It was during the summer of 1940 that the Haganah set about organising itself into an effective fighting force in readiness for any Axis threat that could scupper the plans of the Yishuv (the Palestinian Jews). The Axis forces were thereby added to the list of enemies who could thwart the wishes of those wanting the creation

of a Jewish state. In the absence of being able to impose a national taxation system, financing a defence force became a problem. Voluntary contributions were not adequate to fund the activities of the Haganah and associated paramilitary groups. To some extent, the Kibbutz movement, an autonomous Jewish community was not slow in coming forward to assist and introduced a work programme to aid the troops.

### **The Jewish Brigade goes to war**

During the course of WWII, 15 Jewish groups of Palestinian Jews joined the British and they became known as the Palestine Regiment. This in turn led to the creation of the Jewish Brigade. Ben-Gurion wanted to maximise the value of these volunteers and the British promised him a force based on the model of the WWI battalions. The British were slow to act, but eventually conceded that the brigade could be formed and it was established on 3 July 1944.

Ben-Gurion's desire to form the brigade was also a reaction against a White Paper issued by the British government in 1939, which almost put an end to Jewish hopes for their own state in Palestine. Here, the British wanted to remove the tension and dispel attention on the Middle East in order to focus as much as possible on the imminent European crisis. This entailed pacifying the Arab majority in Palestine and reducing the military intervention there, when troops and equipment

*Right: Aaron Stern, a Haganah soldier, stands with his weapon at the ready in Jaffa's Manshiem Quarter. His tattoo, number 80620, identifies him as a survivor of Auschwitz*





were far more in need in Europe. Even so, military backup by the brigade was given to the British in Iraq, Syria, Italy and North Africa, and from this diverse background, the Haganah elite companies came into existence.

The Jewish Brigade served in Europe until 1946, and after the war launched itself into securing the safe passage of European refugees and contributed to the Jewish self-defence movement. Special care and aid by the brigade was also given to survivors of concentration camps and ghettos, so its role went beyond that of merely a military outfit. However, largely because of persistent conflict with the British, the brigade was disbanded. It later became what is recognised today as the 'foundation' of the IDF.

### A violent peace

In the wake of Allied victory in WWII, the Haganah numbered 30,000 active personnel. The backbone of this organisation was the Palmach, which consisted of 2,000 members. At the outset, Palmach was formed to act against the onslaught of a German invasion, should the British decide to evacuate Palestine. Preparations were also put in place to stockpile arms and military equipment to use at a later stage in the conflict.

The self-defence movement also busied itself by amassing additional arms and these were smuggled into Palestine in varying degrees of risk and uncertainty; in some cases, they were

illegally bought or stolen from the British. The Jews were able to seize vital armaments such as hand grenades, rifles and mortars. Occasionally British soldiers came across workshops organised by the Haganah and they would dismantle and destroy these facilities. So it is no surprise that after WWII, the Haganah saw that its main threat was not wholly Arab forces, but rather the British army.

The British were hostile to the Haganah's primary aims and there followed an engagement between the two sides that was both aggressive and violent. The British reaction was temporarily to define the actions of the Haganah as dangerous and 'illegal'. Where its members were found to be in possession of firearms without licence, they were arrested and sentenced to jail. That there was some tolerance of the Haganah by the British cannot be denied, but it was more the case that the British forces were not extensive enough to police the whole of Palestine. So in some instances, the British turned a blind eye to some of the Haganah's activities. The British position in Palestine was indeed precarious by this time, and in places the Haganah was allowed a free rein to do as it pleased without impunity.

The Haganah and the British engaged in a conflict designed by the latter to impose severe restrictions on immigration and to prevent constraints on the Jews, even though evidence was fast emerging of the trauma of thousands of potential immigrants who had escaped

German concentration camps. Records show how 100 members of the Palmach invaded a stronghold at Atlit, south of Haifa, and freed 200 illegal immigrants. Such actions resulted in the death of an occupant of a British police car. The Haganah had initially wanted a bloodless struggle and it was intent on minimising the number of deaths of both British and Arab forces. To fulfil this aim, it confined itself to damaging and sabotaging Palestine's railway network. The softer approach to attacking Arabs and the British may partly explain the label of 'semi-legal' in the Haganah's moves to effect resistance.

The IDF's origins were based on the inclusion of men and women who had served in the Haganah and the Palmach, and these, along with other underground manpower and survivors of WWII, collectively formed the sole legal armed force in Israel.

The theme of combining both Arab and Jewish groups was later extended to the IDF after Christian and Muslim Arabs joined. The IDF assimilated these elements without compromising the Zionist standpoint of the army in any significant way. As well as those from the Haganah and Palmach, the military group referred to as Irgun was absorbed into the IDF, and another militia known as the Stern Gang.

In the months following the end of WWII, these military factions made plans to effectively co-ordinate, and the distinctive co-operation between Irgun and the Stern Gang led some to believe that these militias had joined forces at a time pre-dating the official launch of the IDF. Both paramilitary organisations were determined to evict the British from Palestine and to form a Jewish state.

From 1946 to 1947, there was a proliferation of incidents involving these paramilitary forces.

**"THE BRITISH WERE HOSTILE TO THE HAGANAH'S PRIMARY AIMS AND THERE FOLLOWED AN ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES THAT WAS BOTH AGGRESSIVE AND VIOLENT"**





## DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

THE ISRAEL DEFENCE FORCES (IDF) DEVELOPED FROM SEVERAL PRECURSORS FOUNDED DURING THE MODERN ERA TO PROTECT THE JEWS OF PALESTINE

### Hashomer

Founded in the spring of 1909, primarily by Socialist members of the modern Zionist movement, Hashomer absorbed a prior organisation, Bar-Giora, and sought to further the settlement of Jewish immigrants in Palestine and to protect the growing populace from attack by hostile Arab groups without dependence on foreign governments. Although continually challenged in its attempts to obtain arms and financial support, Hashomer was the first organisation of its kind to protect all Jewish settlements in Palestine.



### Jewish Legion

The formation of a British Army unit comprised of Russian Jewish immigrants to fight the Ottoman Empire during World War I and liberate Palestine failed in 1915. However, two years later the Jewish Legion was authorised as the 38th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers. Before the end of the war, the legion had grown to five battalions and its ranks included veterans of the earlier Zion Mule Corps. A battalion-sized unit survived the war as the First Judeans, protectors of the Jewish population of Palestine.



### Haganah

Translated from Hebrew as 'The Defence', the Haganah was formed in June 1920 to protect the Jews in Palestine from a growing threat of Arab violence and rioting. By the height of the Arab revolt of the late 1930s, the Haganah had grown to a substantial force of 10,000 active militia and more than 40,000 reservists. After World War II, the veterans of the Haganah and their leaders became the nucleus of the modern Israel Defence Forces.



### Jewish Brigade

Formed in late 1944 and officially known as the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group, the Jewish Brigade numbered more than 5,000 volunteers from Palestine, then under the rule of the British Mandate. The brigade's officers were British, and many of them were Jewish. During World War II, the brigade fought in the Italian Campaign and was stationed in Western Europe. After the proclamation of the nation of Israel in 1948, many brigade veterans served with the IDF, with nearly three dozen becoming generals.



*Above: Soldiers of the IDF's 8th Brigade take aim with a machine gun during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War*

*Below: Palestinian Arabs gather around a destroyed Haganah supply truck en route to Jerusalem*



*Right: A Jewish Brigade soldier holding an artillery shell - the Hebrew reads "A gift to Hitler"*



## ORIGINS OF THE IDF

*Two members of Haganah  
engage in intense urban  
fighting against Arab  
League forces during the  
Arab-Israeli War, c.1948*





A Givati Brigade column of improvised APCs rumbles forwards, c.1948



Men and women train to join the Haganah in a Zionist camp on the site of Belsen concentration camp



The British drew upon every aspect of their experience of colonial rule to maintain law and order, but they could not break the strong determination of the Palestinian Jews to work towards the founding of an independent Jewish state. The British army was criticised for the rough treatment of those who had escaped the Holocaust, some of whom were killed in their attempts to fight for independence. Impeded by a British military interventionist presence, the Jewish underground groupings were limited in their ability to demonstrate professional competence. Yet collectively, the Haganah, Irgun and the Stern Gang attacked Arab settlements and exercised considerable violence in the town of Jaffa, villages in Galilee and northern parts of Palestine.

### The Battle for Jerusalem

From January 1948, Jerusalem, due to the military resistance of the Arabs, became virtually cut off from the rest of Palestine.

## “THE BRITISH DREW UPON EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE OF COLONIAL RULE TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER, BUT THEY COULD NOT BREAK THE STRONG DETERMINATION OF THE PALESTINIAN JEWS”

Access to the city was only possible by the use of convoys of trucks, whose safety was put into jeopardy by opposition from Arab troops who blockaded the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Any progress to reach Jerusalem was only really feasible by the intervention of Palmach, whose members escorted the trucks in their dangerous mission to supply food and provisions to the besieged city.

As the convoys proceeded to climb the hills of Judea, the Jews were subjected to hostile Arabs armed with rifles who had constructed road blocks in readiness to resist the advancing vehicles laden with supplies. Palestinian Arabs ambushed the convoys and their aggressive actions became increasingly more regular and ‘sophisticated’.

The Haganah received orders to launch Operation Nachshon to clear the way for the convoys to pass along the last few miles before reaching Jerusalem. Fierce fighting between Jews and Arabs took place. After the British pulled out of Palestine, the two sides were left to fight each other and the battle for Jerusalem continued. By February 1948, Jerusalem was still locked in battle, and the Arab strongholds in the surrounding hills still posed a major threat to the convoys that tried to break through. Perhaps surprisingly, the British accompanied some of the trucks en route, but this support dwindled when the Haganah made it clear that it wanted to take full responsibility for its own security.

Soon a secret passage was secured, providing a safe opening for the delivery of ample supplies. By July, 8,000 trucks reached

Jerusalem, putting to an end fears that the Jews there would perish through starvation. A truce ensued and the Haganah claimed victory, but it was not fully achieved owing to the sharing of Jerusalem between both Jews and Arabs.

Meanwhile, preparatory moves were taking place to dismantle the Stern Gang and Irgun (all Irgun members merged with Haganah and the Stern Group, apart from those based in Jerusalem) and to place their activist members to constitute a national force in the form of the IDF; this objective was realised on 31 May 1948. The Stern Gang’s leadership in the wake of integration received amnesty from prosecution in respect of its record of rebellion and conflict. As to Irgun members, they became integrated into the IDF at the beginnings of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, and the process of absorbing all military organisations into the IDF was well underway at this time.

At Israel’s birth, the IDF played a key role in Israeli society. These forces were a direct outcome of the dissolution and assimilation of the previously active Jewish underground militias and the IDF was formed in a conservative effort to withstand the later threat of Arab armies.

The IDF became determined to give expression to Zionist values and to commit itself to the protection of Israel. Between 1949 and 1956, the IDF concentrated on developing itself into a modern army and air force. Tensions between the Arabs and Jews persisted and the divisions between the two groups are still ingrained into the contemporary fabric of Middle Eastern religious and political life.





Illustration: Jean-Michel Girard - The Art Agency

## UN GENERAL Y PRESIDENT

Simón Bolívar as he might have appeared at the height of his powers as president of Gran Colombia in the 1820s. During the South American wars of independence the leading revolutionaries dressed like European generals as a symbol of their own military authority and to assert the legitimacy of their fledgling republics to established powers. In his left hand Bolívar holds a map of his large, but short-lived state of Gran Colombia, which was the most visible symbol of his success. Bolívar also treasured a medallion of George Washington that he wore around his neck. It was presented to him in a letter from the Marquis de Lafayette, Washington's famous French ally during the American Revolutionary War.





# SIMÓN BOLÍVAR LIBERATOR

The 'George Washington of South America' was a visionary, revolutionary and general who defied insurmountable odds to redraw the continent

WORDS TOM GARNER

**A**t the height of the age of imperialism, an idealistic revolutionary from the New World declared, "Our native land is America... our ensign is liberty."

These may sound like the words of a Patriot of the American Revolutionary War, but they were in fact uttered by Simon Bolívar, one of the most significant figures in South American history.

During the late-18th and early-19th century, the world was consumed by revolutionary movements that aspired to throw off the shackles of oppressive European governments. The most famous revolutions occurred in France and the 13 colonies of British America, but the creation of the United States has obscured the fact that South America had its own equally important revolutions a few decades later, to expel the Spanish Empire.

From 1810, there were uprisings across the continent from Chile and the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata (which included what is now Argentina) to New Granada (present-day Colombia) and Venezuela. These movements were separate and politically complex but the most prominent figure to emerge from this complicated era was Bolívar, who led an independence movement for an area the size of modern Europe. He was also president of a short-lived pan-South American republic and dreamt of a federal, unified Latin America. His story is one of victories and defeats, triumphs and disappointments and above all, iron grit and determination.

## Enlightenment and Revolt

Born in 1783 in Caracas, Venezuela, Bolívar came from a wealthy 'Creole' family (Latin Americans of colonial Spanish descent) with origins in the Basque Country. Both his parents died by the time he was nine years old and the young Bolívar was raised by his uncle with a tutor who introduced him to writers of the Enlightenment such as Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Their ideas inspired the French Revolution and directly influenced Bolívar in turn at a very young age. When he was sent to Spain to complete his education at

*Below: Simon Bolívar signs the 'Decree of War to the Death' in 1813. The decree was in response to Spanish atrocities and escalated the war in Venezuela*



the age of 16, he openly praised the American and French revolutions to the viceroy of Vera Cruz, which made Spanish officials nervous.

Bolívar visited Europe twice before 1807, with his second visit making the most impression. Whilst staying in Paris he met the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, who fatefully remarked, "I believe that your country is ready for its independence, but I cannot see the man who is to achieve it." Bolívar then witnessed the coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte as emperor of the French in December 1804 and felt deeply conflicted. He viewed Napoleon's actions as a betrayal of the principles of the French Revolution but also recognised that the talent of one man could change history. Bolívar would use these apparent contradictions to good effect and after vowing to free Venezuela in Rome, he returned home in 1807.

By 1811, Spain was embroiled in the Peninsular War and the city council of Caracas used the unstable situation to attempt to depose the Spanish viceroy. Speaking for the first time at a national congress, Bolívar proclaimed, "Let us lay the cornerstone of American freedom without fear. To hesitate is to perish." The First Republic of Venezuela was declared on 5 July 1811 and the country was the first colony anywhere in the Spanish Empire to attempt to gain its own independence.

The act was even more significant as Spain was the oldest colonial power in the Americas, with its roots stretching back to Christopher Columbus's discoveries in 1492. Consequently, like the British and French



before them, the Spanish would not give up their American territories without a fight.

### Fluctuating fortunes

Despite having no military training, Bolívar was made a lieutenant colonel under the command of the rebel leader Francisco de Miranda and his inexperience showed. At the Spanish stronghold of Valencia he fought bravely but the rebel forces were expelled and a second assault resulted in heavy losses. Miranda and Bolívar began to feud and a severe earthquake on 26 March 1812 that killed around 10,000 people worsened the situation. The Spanish took advantage of the chaos and through a combination of Miranda's cautiousness and Bolívar's failed defence of Puerto Cabello, Venezuela was re-conquered.

Bolívar escaped to rebel-held New Granada (Colombia) and rationalised the defeat, "Not the Spanish, but our own disunity led us back into slavery. A strong government could have changed everything." Bolívar now advocated a political system headed by strong noblemen and a lifetime president as well as arguing for the liberation of Venezuela. His home country's freedom would also be the first step in the creation of independent states throughout South America.

By early 1813, Bolívar had reassembled the republican army piece by piece. To begin with he only had 200 men and attacked Spanish garrisons against orders but after a series of small successes, Bolívar was named Cí

of the New Granada Army. This force had to discard European tactics in a land of extreme geography such as mountain ranges, rivers, gorges, plains and no roads, meaning minimal communications. Nevertheless, Bolívar was a good improviser and re-entered Venezuela in May 1813, with 650 men.

Using the challenging terrain to his advantage the rebels used speed and surprise to fight 4,000 Spanish soldiers as well as recruiting from the local population and threatening to kill captured Spaniards. On 15 June 1813 Bolívar issued the 'Decree of War to the Death' which permitted atrocities against any Spaniards who attempted to block Venezuelan independence. The last sentence was uncompromising, "Spaniards... count on death, even if indifferent, if you do not actively work in favour of the independence of America. Americans, count on life, even if guilty."

After five rapid successes, Bolívar had an army of 2,500 and surprised 1,200 Spaniards by harassing them through the night on horseback near Valencia. On the morning of 31 July 1813, the Spanish were defeated at the Battle of Taguanes, which became Bolívar's first full victory. Caracas was re-entered on 7 August and Bolívar was granted huge power. However, the liberation was far from complete.

Half of Venezuela remained under Spanish control and their troops vastly outnumbered the republicans. Bolívar's men often faced odds of 7-1 and were frequently on the brink of defeat. Poor equipment played a key role during

this difficult time. The republican infantry was equipped with slow-loading muskets and were often short of ammunition. They frequently resorted to bayonet charges, which were in turn compounded by a lack of bayonets.

There was also the problem of local support. The Venezuelans were war-weary and in many cases the poverty-stricken population hated the rich Creoles like Bolívar more than the Spanish authorities. The Spanish ruthlessly exploited these divisions by recruiting an army of 'llaneros' who were tough outlaws from the Venezuelan plains. Vastly outnumbering the republicans, the llanero horseman fiercely attacked Bolívar's forces and horrific massacres became the norm on both sides. 20,000 people fled from Caracas when the llaneros marched on the city. Eventually worn down by these fighters, large Spanish reinforcements and inclement weather, Bolívar was forced to retreat back to New Granada. Unable to prevent a civil war, he was forced to sail to exile to the Caribbean with a few officers.

Despite this severe setback Bolívar remained optimistic and wrote a famous document known as the 'Letter from Jamaica' where he stated his continued opposition to Spanish rule, "The veil has been torn asunder. We have already seen the light, and it is not our desire to be thrust back into darkness. The American

*Below: Bolívar honouring the flag after the Battle of Carabobo in June 1821. The victory led to the creation of Gran Colombia*

**"BOLÍVAR'S MEN OFTEN FACED ODDS OF 7-1 AND WERE FREQUENTLY ON THE BRINK OF DEFEAT"**





# GRAN COLOMBIA

## BOLÍVARIAN POWERHOUSE

BOLÍVAR'S IMPACT ON NORTHERN AND WESTERN SOUTH AMERICA WAS PROFOUND, AND SIX NATIONS BECAME PART OF HIS LARGE NEW COUNTRY GRAN COLOMBIA. THE REPUBLIC MAY HAVE BEEN SHORT-LIVED BUT ITS INFLUENCE CAN STILL BE SEEN IN THE FLAGS OF THE MODERN COUNTRIES THAT HAD THE MOST CONNECTIONS TO THE VENEZUELAN LEADER

### PANAMA

The independence of Panama developed separately to Bolívar's campaigns but the country declared independence in 1821 and voluntarily joined Gran Colombia. It remained in a union with post-Bolivarian Colombia until 1903.

### VENEZUELA

Bolívar's home country was the crucible of the South American independence movements and the oldest to attempt independence. It became the first state of Gran Colombia in 1819 and the first to break away in 1829.

### COLOMBIA

The only American country to be named after Christopher Columbus, Colombia was formerly known as New Granada and declared independence in 1811. It became the last part of Gran Colombia when the republic broke up in 1831.

### ECUADOR

Ecuadorians first rose up against Spanish rule in 1809 but the 1822 invasion by Bolívar and Sucre secured its freedom from Spanish rule. Ecuador gained full independence from Gran Colombia in 1830.

### PERU

Peru largely owed its independence to the Argentinean general José de San Martín but Bolívar completed the liberation of the country with a campaign that included the decisive battles of Junín and Ayacucho in 1824.

### GRAN COLOMBIA

Formerly the Viceroyalty of New Granada, Gran Colombia was a short-lived representative republic and was essentially the brainchild of Bolívar. The secession of Venezuela and Ecuador sealed its abolition in 1831.

### BOLIVIA

Formerly known as 'Upper Peru', Bolivia was created in 1825. As the country's namesake, Bolívar became its life president and wrote the constitution.

**"BOLÍVAR'S HOME COUNTRY WAS THE CRUCIBLE OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS AND THE OLDEST TO ATTEMPT INDEPENDENCE"**



# "DIE OR CONQUER!"

THE FIGHT FOR BOLÍVARIAN INDEPENDENCE IN SOUTH AMERICA OWED MUCH OF ITS SUCCESS TO WILD HORSEMEN AND BRITISH VOLUNTEERS

Bolívar's campaigns of independence were not a straightforward clash between revolutionary South Americans and their Spanish overlords. Only 10 per cent of the 'Spanish' soldiers actually came from Spain and the vast majority were American 'royalists' who were fighting against their own people. From this confusing conflict emerged two military groups that helped determine the fate of the continent: the foreign 'legions' and the 'llaneros'.

Republicans initially suffered from a lack of men, training and local support, so Bolívar recruited foreign mercenaries. He found a rich resource in recently unemployed soldiers from the Napoleonic Wars. Most of these recruits were British and Irish and these battle-hardened veterans proved invaluable to Bolívar. Between 1817-21, more than 6,500 volunteers sailed from the British Isles and formed into effective regiments or 'legions' that included skilled units of hussars, riflemen and artillerymen. The legions' talents played key roles or were present at many republican victories such as Boyacá, Carabobo, Pichincha and Ayacucho.

Most volunteers joined Bolívar for mercenary reasons. They were promised higher promotion than in the British Army, wore

similar uniforms and also received equivalent wages. As one former officer put it he sought, "flags, banners, glory and riches!" However, the ethos of the volunteers was not entirely self-serving. Like the Napoleonic Wars, many of the soldiers believed they were helping to free South America from another form of continental oppression and the 2nd British Legion's motto was "Morir o vencer" ("Die or Conquer").

Conversely, Bolívar had problems from his own people and especially the 'llaneros'. The llaneros were tough cowboys from the Venezuelan plains who were often bandits or fugitives. They despised aristocratic Creoles like Bolívar and the Spanish unscrupulously recruited them to fight the republicans. One cavalry unit was known as the 'Legion of Hell' and consisted of 10,000 fierce riders armed with spears and knives and inflicted huge damage on the republicans. Nevertheless, Bolívar managed to encourage many llaneros to defect by living like one himself on campaign. This earned the llaneros's respect and they eventually became staunch allies of the republican cause.

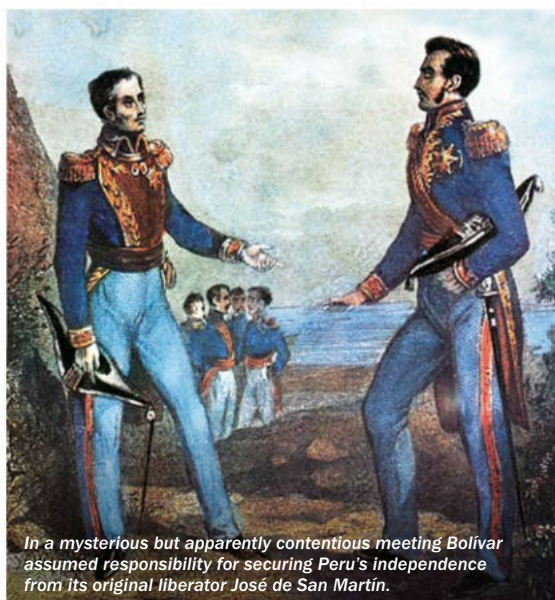
*Below: José Antonio Páez at the Battle of Las Queseras del Medio. Páez was a successful llanero captain and was pivotal in assisting Bolívar liberate Venezuela*



*Left: One of the most famous British volunteers was General Gregor MacGregor, a Scottish conman who fought in Venezuela and later invented an entire country in Honduras to launch a huge investment scam*

**"MANY OF THE SOLDIERS BELIEVED THEY WERE HELPING TO FREE SOUTH AMERICA FROM ANOTHER FORM OF CONTINENTAL OPPRESSION AND THE 2ND BRITISH LEGION'S MOTTO WAS 'MORIR O VENCER'"**





*In a mysterious but apparently contentious meeting Bolívar assumed responsibility for securing Peru's independence from its original liberator José de San Martín.*



*Above: The Battle of Boyacá led to the liberation of New Granada and was the first decisive step to ending Spanish rule in South America*

provinces are fighting for their freedom and they will ultimately succeed."

Bolívar then fled to Haiti after an assassination attempt but he managed to recruit 500 men known as the 'Liberating Army' and returned to Venezuela in December 1816. Despite being outnumbered by 17,500 Spanish troops Bolívar never left South America again.

### Fighting for freedom

In order to successfully take the fight to the Spanish, Bolívar adopted clever tactics to raise support for Venezuelan independence. Proclamations were issued that spread stories about fictitious republican victories all over the country despite the fact that he only operated on the plains of the Orinoco River and had remote headquarters. More crucially, Bolívar recruited a young guerrilla cavalry expert called José Antonio Páez. Páez was talented at lightning attacks against the Spanish and his skills were impressive enough to persuade many llaneros to change sides and join the republicans.

Bolívar was also improving his own fighting ability and began to launch bold attacks against the enemy. On one occasion with only 15 officers he attacked a large Spanish force that was waiting in ambush. Bolívar immediately ordered his men to 'form ranks' and prepare for an assault as though his own army was directly behind him. The Spaniards fell for the ruse and were compelled to retreat.

By January 1818, Bolívar had 3,000 soldiers and marched 563 kilometres through swamps to join Páez's 1,000 cavalry. Although they largely lacked firearms, the republicans surprised so many garrisons that the commander-in-chief of the Spanish forces in Venezuela and New Granada barely escaped. Although the Spanish did eventually regroup and inflict severe damage on Bolívar, he increased the professionalism of his army by recruiting thousands of mostly British discharged soldiers from the Napoleonic Wars.

These intermittent, but nonetheless increasing successes marked a new change in Bolívar's fortunes. Páez was waging an effective guerrilla war and on one occasion lost only six Venezuelans compared to 400 Spaniards when he successfully lured them into

a trap. Small victories like these encouraged Bolívar to launch an audacious campaign into New Granada across the Andes.

With his mixed band of around 2,500 soldiers (including a British legion) Bolívar crossed 10 swollen rivers and moved through flooded plains before he even reached the mountains but by late June 1819, the Andes came into view. Most of the men were unused to mountain climbing and the temperature grew increasingly cold. By almost 5,500 metres high the horses and livestock had died and almost 1,000 men died during the crossing. Those who survived were reduced to flogging each other to keep the circulation going. Despite the hardships, once the crossing was over the local population was keen to resupply the men and they fought off 3,000 Spaniards at a well-defended position at Pantano de Vargas on 25 July. One Spanish commander reported, "The annihilation of the republicans appeared inevitable, but despair gave them courage. Our infantry could not resist them."

More significant events were to follow. After Pantano de Vargas, Bolívar pursued the retreating Spaniards and came to blows at an almost evenly matched battle at Boyacá on 7 August 1819. The republicans prevented the Spanish from crossing a bridge that would have enabled them to reach a friendly garrison. Over the course of two hours, half of the Spaniards were captured while the rest retreated or were killed. Bolívar proceeded to capture the garrison of Bogotá on 10 August where he was proclaimed as the liberator of New Granada.

The victory at Boyacá emboldened the republicans and more of the local population began to support Bolívar as well as Spanish

**"IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE SPANISH, BOLÍVAR ADOPTED CLEVER TACTICS TO RAISE SUPPORT FOR VENEZUELAN INDEPENDENCE"**

deserters. Bolívar was able to return to Angostura in Venezuela and on 17 December, he was elected as the first president and military dictator of a new state called the 'Republic of Colombia'.

### Gran Colombia

The new country was a unification of Venezuela and New Granada but large parts remained under Spanish control and skirmishes continued, despite a general armistice. Bolívar used this lull to increase his forces and by the time the war resumed in April 1821, he had 6,000 men compared to 5,000 Spaniards.

The Spanish, under General Miguel de la Torre, attempted to block the passes towards Caracas but mismanaged the positioning of his troops and ended up with distant cavalry units, a lack of sharpshooters and a weak right flank. Bolívar sent Páez's cavalry and infantry to outflank the Spanish right flank but they were spotted and driven back.

The overconfident Spanish then pursued the republicans but ran straight into an experienced British legion whose disciplined volley fire halted their attack. The Spanish right collapsed and Bolívar ordered a full advance. The subsequent republican victory was decisive: a third of the Spanish force was captured with as many again being killed or wounded. Carabobo was the battle that secured Venezuela's independence and convinced the Spanish that the region could never be retaken.

After Carabobo, Bolívar triumphantly entered Caracas on 29 June 1821 and on 7 September, the state of Gran Colombia was established. This was a significant enlargement of the republic and its territory now covered much of modern Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and parts of Panama, Guyana and Brazil. Bolívar was reconfirmed as president and his ambitions grew even further. He was not content with consolidating and securing the sovereignty of Gran Colombia but aimed to eject the Spanish from the entire continent. To achieve that, Bolívar would have to strike at the very heart of their colonial empire: Peru.



*Bolívar leading his troops at his last major battle at Junín in 1824. His victory laid the foundations for the decisive republican triumph at Ayacucho*



*The Battle of Carabobo secured Venezuelan independence and also led to the creation of the Republic of Gran Colombia*



## “SOLDIERS, YOU ARE ABOUT TO FINISH THE GREATEST UNDERTAKING HEAVEN HAS CONFIDED TO MEN – THAT OF SAVING AN ENTIRE WORLD FROM SLAVERY!”

### The end of Spanish rule

Such was Bolívar's political power by the early 1820s that he had to leave many military affairs to talented subordinates such as Antonio José de Sucre who helped to liberate Ecuador in 1822. Sucre's decisive victory at the Battle of Pichincha on 24 May 1822 completely ejected the Spanish from Ecuador and enabled Bolívar to leave Gran Colombia under his vice-president's control to meet up with his victorious general.

Bolívar was not the only major revolutionary in South America and he had a match in José de San Martín, who was the key figure in the independence movement for the southern part of the continent. San Martín had liberated Argentina from Spanish rule, played a significant role in Chilean independence and had seized the Peruvian capital of Lima with 4,500 men. He had declared Peru's independence on 12 July 1821 but 19,000 Spanish troops still remained in the country and San Martín was unable to push inland to eject them.

Recognising a natural ally in San Martín, Bolívar met with the Argentine general at Guayaquil in Ecuador on 26 July 1822 to discuss potential cooperation. The meeting was not cordial. There was no official record of the encounter but the two men reportedly had different visions for South America and San Martín was discouraged by Bolívar's overbearing insistence on leading the campaign. The dejected San Martín left the ultimate conquest of Peru to Bolívar and departed the country. Peruvians who viewed San Martín as their true liberator met the decision with dismay but Bolívar was now in total control.

By June 1824, Bolívar had assembled a 9,000-strong army to fight two large Spanish armies in Peru, totalling 20,000 men in the highlands around Cuzco. In order to prevent the two armies from linking up Bolívar moved his own force over the Andes at 3,650

metres. Like his previous Andean campaign, the conditions were terrible with inadequate clothing, precipices, a lack of oxygen and many cases of sun-blindness. However, at the top of the mountains, Bolívar reviewed his troops and declared, “Soldiers, you are about to finish the greatest undertaking Heaven has confided to men – that of saving an entire world from slavery!”

On 6 August 1824, Bolívar's army had reached the heights above the plains of Junín and a Spanish army was spotted moving below. 900 of Bolívar's horsemen were despatched to the Spanish rear cavalry and the resulting engagement lasted 45 minutes. The battle was curiously old-fashioned with the principal weapons being lances and swords. No shots were reportedly fired. A British cavalryman called William Miller largely helped to secure victory for Bolívar by ordering his horsemen to feint a retreat before rounding on the pursuing Spanish. By the time the brief fight was over, Bolívar had lost just 120 men in comparison to 400-500 Spaniards. The Battle of Junín was the last battle that Bolívar personally led but it set the scene for the final clash of the South American independence wars.

The defeated Spanish commander José de Canterac hastily retreated back to Cuzco and his defeat caused the Spanish to lose possibly 3,000 more soldiers after the battle due to disease, desertion or defection to Bolívar's forces. Bolívar had handed over the command of his army to Sucre while he dealt with political matters. The opposing armies hunted each other until they finally met in the Ayacucho valley on 9 December 1824. Sucre only had one four-pounder gun compared to 24 Spanish artillery pieces but he rallied his troops saying, “Upon your efforts depends the fate of South America.” Knowing that the Spanish executed any surrendering soldiers, Sucre's men fought fiercely and charged the enemy with bayonets. The startled Spanish lost 2,100 men, 15 guns

and prominent men surrendered such as de Canterac and even José de la Serna, the Viceroy of Peru. Such was the decisive nature of the victory that Sucre wrote to Bolívar, “The war is ended, and the liberation of Peru has been completed.”

### A continental legacy

The Battle of Ayacucho effectively ended the Spanish American wars of independence and is sometimes referred to as the ‘South American Waterloo.’ Bolívar was in doubt about its significance and greatly praised Sucre, “The battle of Ayacucho is the greatest American glory. So long as Ayacucho is remembered, the name of Sucre will be remembered.”

Nevertheless, the ejection of the Spanish from South America would not have been possible without Bolívar and he was recognised accordingly. On 6 August 1825 the Congress of Upper Peru created a new nation and named it ‘Bolivia’ in his honour. It was the high point of Bolívar's career and when he convened a congress of Latin American republics in 1826, he hoped that the nations he had helped to create would become unified. However, the regional divisions were too great and he resigned as president of Gran Colombia in May 1830. He died a disappointed man months later of tuberculosis aged only 47.

Gran Colombia, arguably Bolívar's greatest political success, effectively died with him but his achievements remain towering in world history. Without his relentless campaigns, much of contemporary South America would not exist and in his lifetime he was dubbed as the ‘second Washington of the New World’. Out of the six nation states he was pivotal in creating, two have become literal memorials to his vision; Bolivia and his homeland, which is officially called the ‘Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.’ Put simply Bolívar is probably the most important figure in Latin American history and certainly its most successful general.



*Above: An award patch given to republican officers who fought in the Peruvian campaign of 1823-24. The battles of Junín and Ayacucho are clearly represented*





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A dramatic illustration of a German Heinkel He 111 bomber in flight. The aircraft is shown from a low angle, emphasizing its size and power. It has a yellow and grey camouflage paint scheme. The background is a fiery orange and red sky, suggesting a city on fire below. The bomber is positioned in the upper half of the frame, with its wings and engines clearly visible. The overall mood is one of destruction and the horror of aerial warfare.

German bombers rain death  
and destruction down on the  
town of Guernica


# DAWN OF THE

WORDS DAVID SMITH

# BLITZK

80 years ago, the world was introduced to a terrifying new form of warfare,  
one that put undefended civilian targets on the front line





**A**t 4.30pm on Monday 26 April 1937, a church bell began to ring in the Basque town of Guernica. It was market day, and the number of people in the town had swollen to around 10,000 as peasants from the surrounding region gathered to buy and sell their produce.

A single plane was seen approaching and the civilian population watched with foreboding as it circled overhead. Any doubts over its intentions were removed when it began to drop bombs onto the town. The destruction of Guernica had begun.

### **"It is necessary to spread terror"**

The Spanish Civil War had erupted the previous year when right-wing forces had risen up against the Republican government. Intended to be a short, sharp grab for power, Republican resistance was stronger than anticipated and the country was dragged into a full-blown war.

From the start, it was clear that this would be a particularly vicious conflict. General Emilio Mola, the architect of the rebel uprising, declared that, "It is necessary to spread terror. We have to create the impression of mastery, eliminating without scruples or hesitation all those who do not think as we do."

The complex political picture in Spain also served to heighten animosities. The Marxists, socialists, communists and workers found it difficult to pull together on the Republican side, while Mola and General Francisco Franco did a better job of unifying the various right-wing elements as 'Nationalists'. With the support of the military, the Catholic Church and the wealthy elite of the nation, the right-wing rebels were formidable, but still looked for outside help.

The fascist dictatorships in Germany and Italy looked favourably on their upstart cousin in Spain, and military aid was flowing into the country by August of 1936. The beleaguered left-wing forces were not so lucky. France and Great Britain were determined to remain neutral. The British establishment was more sympathetic to the uprising than the French, and there was a fear that involvement in the war could drive a wedge between the two key allies in the stand against European fascism.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill summed up the situation in August when he commented that: "This Spanish wester is not the business of either of us [France or Britain]. Neither

**"A SINGLE PLANE WAS SEEN APPROACHING AND THE CIVILIAN POPULATION WATCHED WITH FOREBODING AS IT CIRCLED OVERHEAD. ANY DOUBTS OVER ITS INTENTIONS WERE REMOVED WHEN IT BEGAN TO DROP BOMBS ONTO THE TOWN. THE DESTRUCTION OF GUERNICA HAD BEGUN"**



of these Spanish factions expresses our conception of civilisation."

Only Stalin's Russia was willing to support the Republicans, and military aid was limited as he seemed concerned only with helping them to maintain the struggle, thereby occupying German attention, rather than in helping them secure an outright victory. What supplies he was willing to send began to arrive by October.

## The Condor Legion

Following the failure to score a quick knockout, rebel forces were faced with a hard slog to wrest control of the country from the Republican government. The focus was initially, and understandably, Madrid as the capital of the nation, but resistance proved strong and progress was slower than desired.

To make matters worse, the Nationalists' Italian allies proved to be unimpressive, suffering an outright defeat at Guadalajara in March 1937, despite a significant advantage in both men and matériel.

Although the victory heartened the Republicans, it led to a change of strategic thinking from the rebels. Rather than throw forces against the hard target of Madrid, Franco

looked for softer options elsewhere. The Basque Country to the north was selected as the new focus for the war.

The area had not been ignored previously, with Bilbao, the most important city in the region, having been bombed in September 1936. Now, however, it would become the subject of an experiment in the innovative tactics of one of the key foreign elements in the war: the Condor Legion.

Commanded by General Hugo Sperrle, this combined force of army and air force units from Nazi Germany was theoretically under the control of General Franco, but as Sperrle himself noted after the war: "All suggestions made by the Condor Legion for the conduct of the war were accepted gratefully and followed."

Together with his chief of staff, Wolfram von Richthofen (a cousin of the Red Baron), Sperrle was developing ideas on how combined units could best operate under the concept of 'close air support'. The newly focused offensive against the Basque Country would give them the opportunity they had been waiting for.

The Vizcaya region was the first target in the new offensive, with the town of Durango destroyed by aerial bombardment, resulting in

around 300 deaths. Both the Condor Legion and the Italian Aviazione Legionaria took part.

The offensive was a success, driving Basque forces back, and discussion started on where the next major blow should fall. The town of Guernica, lying across the route of retreat for the Basques, was a tempting target; an attack there would not only impede the retreat but would also spread fear through the region.

## The 'ring of fire'

Any military benefits to the raid, however, were of strictly secondary importance. The real goal was to spread terror. On 25 April, a chilling radio broadcast was made by the rebels: "Franco is about to deliver a mighty blow against which all resistance is useless," the broadcast threatened. "Basques! Surrender now and your lives will be spared!"

If the offer to accept surrender was genuine, it was not left open for long. The bombing of Guernica started the next day, and it was clear that a great deal of thought had gone into the attack. Once more, it was planes of both the Condor Legion and the Aviazione Legionaria that took part, although the role played by the Italians was minor and is often overlooked.

# THE CONDOR EXPERIMENT

SPANISH NATIONALISTS WERE ABLE TO DRAW ON SUPPORT FROM BOTH ITALY AND GERMANY, NONE MORE FAMOUS THAN A COMBINED ARMS UNIT FROM NAZI GERMANY

The experimental nature of the Condor Legion is borne out by the fact that it ushered several of Germany's most famous planes into active service, including the Heinkel He 111 bomber and the Messerschmitt Bf 109.

Only four He 111s saw action at Guernica, but the versatile twin-engined medium bomber went on to become one of the most famous German planes of World War II. In contrast, the He 51 biplane was obsolescent as a fighter during the Spanish Civil War (although it still had value as a ground-attack plane) and was already being replaced by the far superior Bf 109 by the time Guernica was bombed.

The Condor Legion was so named to create the impression that it was manned by German 'volunteers' of the Spanish Foreign Legion. Its personnel were officially discharged

from the German armed forces (they were also promoted one rank upwards) and Legion uniforms were made in the same olive colour as the Spanish Army, so as not to draw undue attention.

Although the air element of the Condor Legion is the most notorious, it included significant ground elements as well. Along with the fighter, bomber, air reconnaissance and anti-aircraft units provided by the Luftwaffe, a combined panzer/anti-tank unit was provided by the army, alongside a signals company.

Although figures as high as 50,000 have been mentioned regarding the number of Condor Legion personnel, it is thought that its numbers never exceeded 6,500 at any one time, with an estimated 15,000 men in total serving in Spain over the course of the war.

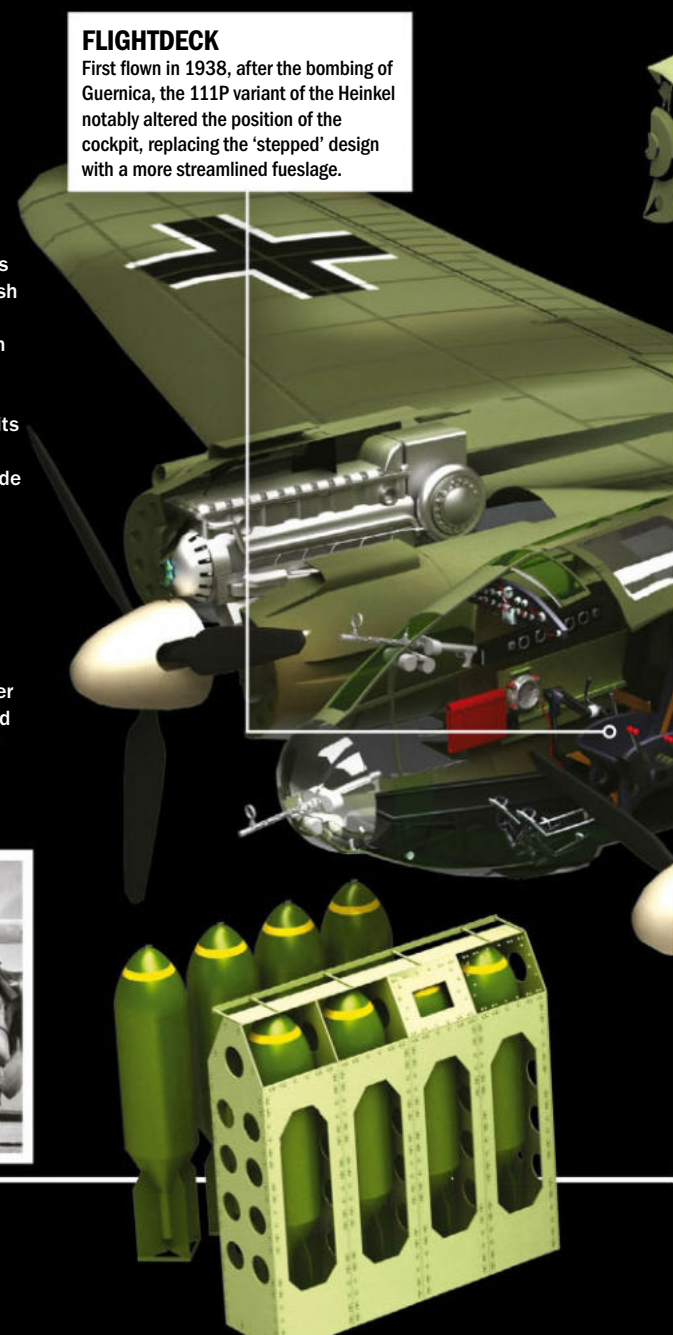
The tactics explored by the Condor Legion under the watchful eye of Wolfram von Richthofen would later be incorporated into the German 'Blitzkrieg' concept. It was Wolfram who masterminded the invasion of Poland in 1939.

## FLIGHTDECK

First flown in 1938, after the bombing of Guernica, the 111P variant of the Heinkel notably altered the position of the cockpit, replacing the 'stepped' design with a more streamlined fuselage.



Left: Wolfram von Richthofen masterminded the aerial raid





# "THERE WAS NO ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENCE, NO DEFENCE OF ANY KIND, WE WERE ENCIRCLED AND CORRALLED BY DIABOLIC FORCES IN PURSUIT OF DEFENCELESS INHABITANTS"

Eyewitness accounts of the bombing raid agreed on the main elements of the attack. The accounts of a Catholic priest called Father Alberto Onaindia, still resonate today. "There was no anti-aircraft defence," he wrote, "no defence of any kind, we were encircled and corralled by diabolic forces in pursuit of defenceless inhabitants."

Five minutes after the first plane had dropped its six bombs (some reports also claimed that hand grenades were dropped to panic the populace of the town), a second German bomber arrived and did the same. The civilians in Guernica were already dispersing or seeking refuge in cellars or shelters when the next wave, four Junkers Ju 52 bombers, arrived 15 minutes later.

The steadily increasing intensity of the bombing added a psychological element to the terror experienced by the people trapped in the

town. Many of them decided to make a run for it and headed out into the fields surrounding Guernica, but von Richthofen had planned for this as well – ten Heinkel HE 51s (biplane fighters) strafed these refugees down as they ran, driving many of them back into the centre of town in a tactic von Richthofen liked to call his 'Feuerring', or 'ring of fire'.

Although the Condor Legion included Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive-bombers, they were not required on this day. The absence of any sort of air defence meant that bombers like the Ju 52 and the newly developed Heinkel He 111 could fly low with impunity, improving their accuracy.

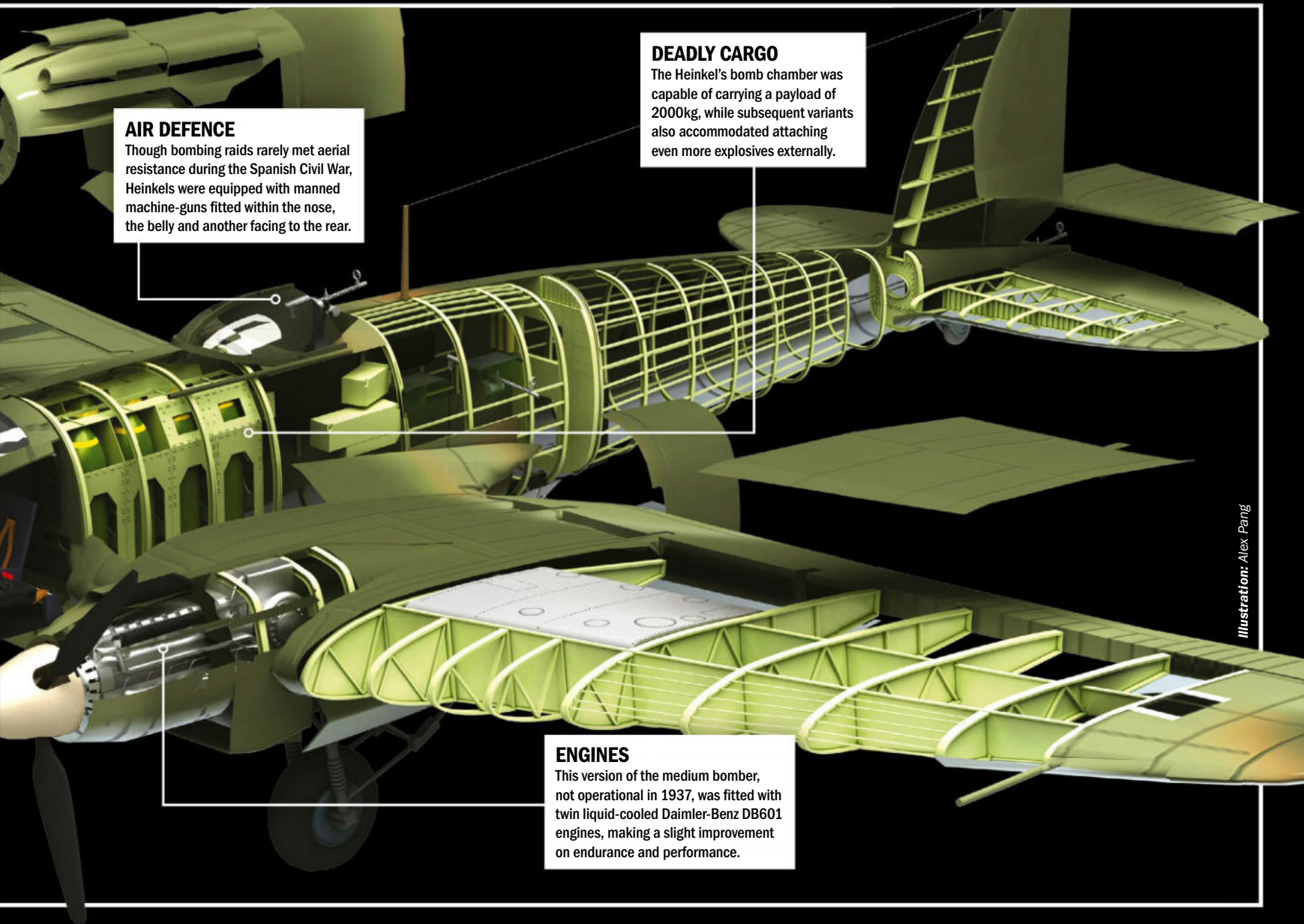
Among the first targets of the bombers had been the fire station and water tanks, and the reason for this soon became apparent. As well as high explosive bombs, the attacking aircraft were also dropping EC.B.1. incendiaries, which

burned at 2,500 degrees centigrade and soon started serious fires.

Father Onaindia was among the people trying to get out of the town as the attack continued: "The explosion of the bombs, the



Above: General Hugo Sperrle, commanding officer of Germany's Condor Legion



## AIR DEFENCE

Though bombing raids rarely met aerial resistance during the Spanish Civil War, Heinkels were equipped with manned machine-guns fitted within the nose, the belly and another facing to the rear.

## DEADLY CARGO

The Heinkel's bomb chamber was capable of carrying a payload of 2000kg, while subsequent variants also accommodated attaching even more explosives externally.

## ENGINES

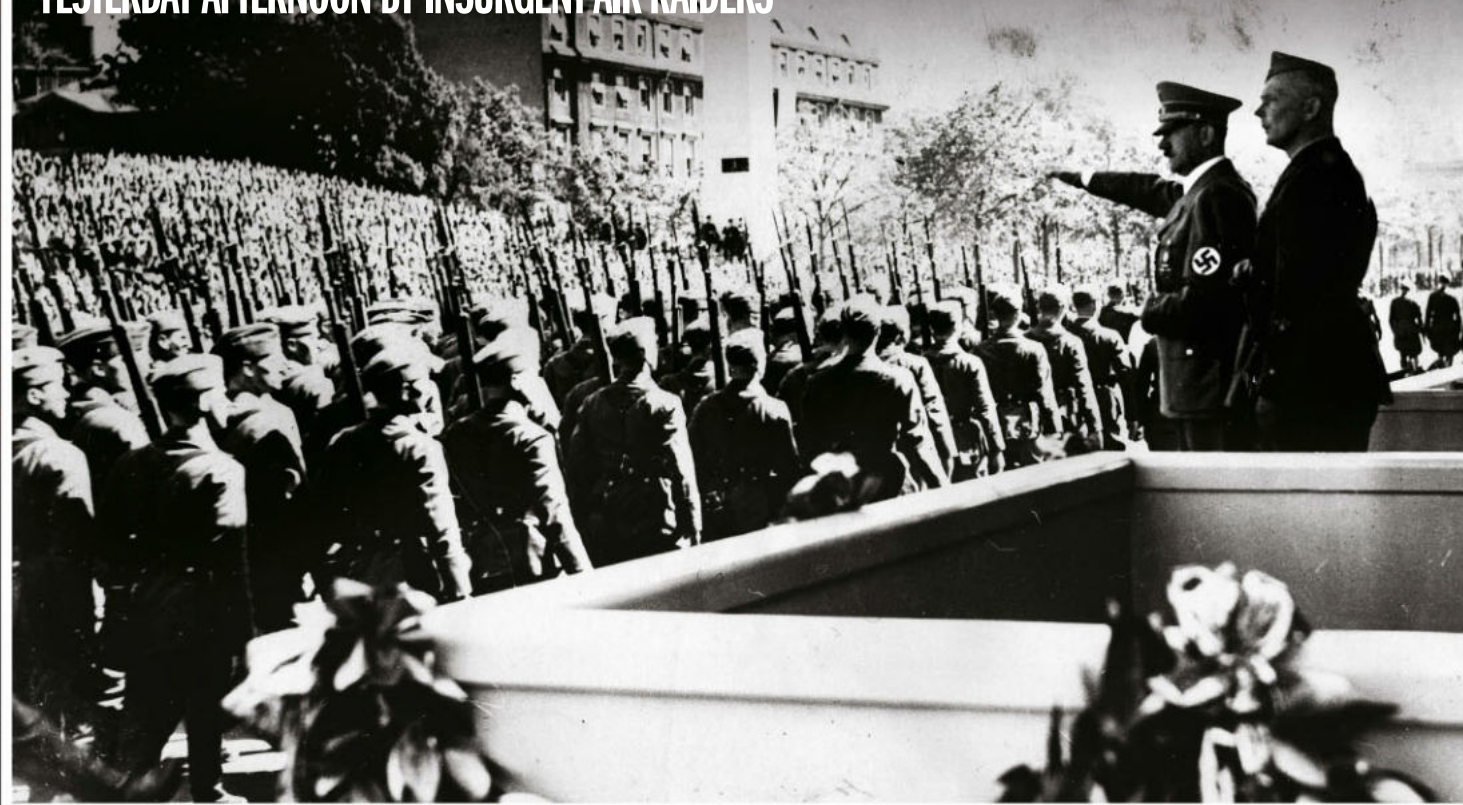
This version of the medium bomber, not operational in 1937, was fitted with twin liquid-cooled Daimler-Benz DB601 engines, making a slight improvement on endurance and performance.

Illustration: Alex Pang



**"GUERNICA, THE MOST ANCIENT TOWN OF THE BASQUES AND THE CENTRE OF THEIR CULTURAL TRADITION... WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED YESTERDAY AFTERNOON BY INSURGENT AIR RAIDERS"**

*The Condor Legion received the personal praise of Adolf Hitler in 1939*



fires which were beginning to break out and the harassment of the machine-gunning planes forced us to take cover," he reported. "In the midst of that conflagration, we saw people who fled screaming, praying or gesticulating against the attackers."

Gesticulating was as much defiance as could be offered as the German and Italian planes calmly went about their business for more than three hours. After the planes finally broke off their attack, at 7.45pm, Guernica continued to burn through the night.

Among the witnesses was a group of international reporters who added huge credibility to early reports of the attack, as the fascist forces tried to deny responsibility immediately after the bombing. Key among those reporters present was the South African George Steer, who was working for *The Times* and presented a detailed account of the battle, drawing on eyewitness reports as well as his own experiences.

Steer and his journalistic colleagues had been strafed by German planes while driving in their car, but only reached the town after the bombing

had stopped. Steer's dispatch was dynamite, and his editor, Geoffrey Dawson, agonised over printing it, but the calm tone of the report helped to sway his decision to go to press and on 28 April the world read of the assault.

"Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques and the centre of their cultural tradition," Steer wrote, "was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent air raiders."

Steer went on to name the German plane types that had seen action, as well as the types of bombs that had been dropped, critically the incendiary devices intended to cause a firestorm to destroy the town. He reported how the town was still a hellish place at 2am the following morning as the fires continued to rage. "Throughout the night, houses were falling," he reported, "until the streets became long heaps of red impenetrable debris."

Steer's reporting, although restrained, held an unmistakeable undercurrent of anger, never more so than when he reported on the tactics employed by the German and Italian aggressors, noting that they "may be of interest to students of the new military science."

### **The quest for the truth**

There was no doubting the efficacy of the "new military science," but no sooner had Guernica been destroyed that the Nationalists attempted to downplay its impact or even deny responsibility outright. The hugely detailed newspaper article from Steer had been unexpected and attempts were now made to pin blame for the destruction on the Basques. Luis Bolín, chief press officer for Franco, claimed that the Basques had blown up the town themselves for propaganda purposes.

Despite the ludicrous nature of this claim, it was gratefully seized upon by right-wing sympathisers and this, along with efforts to smear the character and professionalism of Steer himself, muddled the waters for decades after the attack.

As well as the orchestrated confusion, there were areas of genuine uncertainty. It was almost impossible, for instance, to be sure how many people had died in the ruins of Guernica. Basque authorities initially released a low figure (Steer believed this was to prevent panic from gripping the rest of the region, particularly

*Below: Fires continued to rage through the night after the attack, with many people suffocating in their underground shelters as a result*





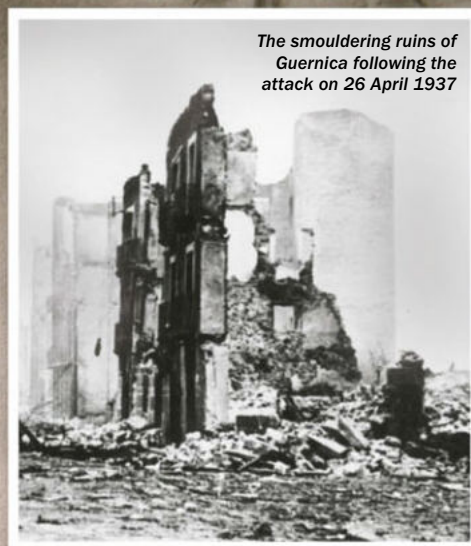
# GUERRE NICA

"He who has done this is not with me but against me."  
In this French anti-fascist poster, an angry Christ refutes Nationalists' claims to be defending Christianity

En Verité'  
je vous le dis  
Celui qui fait faire  
cela  
n'est pas avec moi  
mais Contre moi.



**"THE DENIAL... OF ALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF [GUERNICA] HAS CREATED NO ASTONISHMENT HERE... I HAVE SPOKEN WITH HUNDREDS OF HOMELESS AND DISTRESSED PEOPLE, WHO ALL GIVE PRECISELY THE SAME DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENTS"**



The smouldering ruins of Guernica following the attack on 26 April 1937

## LESSONS OF GUERNICA

THE STRUGGLE TO TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BOMBING BEGAN, EVEN AS THE CITY'S FIRES STILL RAGED

The newspaper report on the bombing of Guernica by *The Times* journalist George Steer was greeted with shock, horror and anger. Reprinted in both *The New York Times* and the French *L'Humanité* (it was this version that was read by Picasso), it provoked an immediate outcry.

*The New York Times* ran a highly critical editorial the following day, but lack of certainty over the details left them to refer only to 'Rebel airplanes of German type'. American congressmen, senators and religious leaders joined in the angry condemnation of the atrocity.

In London, *The Times* came under pressure from Francoist sympathisers to verify or retract the report. Steer was asked for further

clarification and he replied immediately: "The denial... of all knowledge of the destruction of [Guernica] has created no astonishment here... I have spoken with hundreds of homeless and distressed people, who all give precisely the same description of the events."

In Germany, the veracity of Steer's report was attacked indirectly – the fact that 'Times' spelled backwards is 'Semit' allowed the paper to be dismissed as a tool of Jewish propaganda. Had the ensuing war gone badly, it would have been problematic for Steer. He was placed on the Gestapo's Special Wanted List.

Steer wrote a book on the attack, *The Tree Of Gernika*, in 1938. He died after crashing his jeep in Burma on Christmas Day, 1944.





*The Oak of Guernica, a symbol of the Basque people. The fourth oak miraculously survived the bombing, but was replaced in 1986*

**“VON RICHTHOFEN WAS ANGRY THAT HIS PERFECT BOMBING ASSAULT HAD NOT BEEN FOLLOWED UP IMMEDIATELY BY GROUND FORCES”**

those in Bilbao), but they soon revised that figure to an estimated 1,645 dead, with a further 889 injured. However, Francoists argued that the figure was more like 200.

The arrival of rebel forces at the town on 29 April deepened confusion as looting, further abuses of people and property and destruction of evidence followed.

The fact that around 300 people died in the shorter and much less intense bombing of Durango just weeks earlier makes the figure of 200 deaths at Guernica seem derisory. The deliberate targeting of civilians, and the herding of them back into the town itself, followed by the burning of the place, lent credence to the higher figure put forward by Basque authorities, but the true number can never be known.

What can be categorically stated, however, is the intention of those who perpetrated the act. Von Richthofen was angry that his perfect bombing assault had not been followed up immediately by ground forces, the ultimate goal of the ‘close air support’ tactic that he was fascinated by. Civilian casualties were acceptable in pursuit of his goal. In fact, in his own words, “nothing is unreasonable that can further destroy enemy morale and quickly.”

The force assembled for the attack also speaks to the determination of von Richthofen to strike a telling blow. It is estimated a total of 23 Junkers Ju 52 bombers, four Heinkel He 111 bombers, ten Heinkel He 51 fighters, three Italian Savoia-Marchetti S.81 Pipistrello bombers, a single Dornier Do 17 twin-engine bomber, and 12 Italian Fiat C.R.32 biplane fighters took part in the raid, and it is also possible that six of the new Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighters were also involved.

Francoist denials over culpability for the attack on Guernica were further undermined

by the work of other eyewitness journalists, including the American Virginia Cowles. On reaching Guernica she found, “...a lonely chaos of timber and brick, like an ancient civilisation in process of being excavated.” Questioning of locals brought forth the same story Steer had uncovered and Cowles later encountered a rebel staff officer who confirmed that the town had been bombed and not blown up by the Basques themselves.

### **The fall of Bilbao**

The attack on Guernica was an unequivocal success, deeply shaking Basque morale. Bilbao fell on 19 June 1937, after stubborn but futile resistance. The ‘iron ring’ of defences protecting the city included trenches, bunkers and fortified emplacements, but the layout of the defences had been given to the Nationalists in March. From June, the Condor Legion was able to launch bombing raids with great accuracy, destroying the iron ring defences and forcing the Basques to withdraw.

Street fighting in Bilbao followed, and the appearance of Nationalist sympathisers within the town itself (a so-called ‘fifth-column’, which Mola had first talked about during the advance on Madrid) helped to further weaken the defenders’ morale. Mola himself did not live to see the capture of the Basque city, as he died in a plane crash on 3 June 1937, just days before the city fell. Mola’s death, and that of General José Sanjurjo the previous year (also in a plane crash) left Franco as the undisputed leader of the Nationalist rebels.

Amid the chaos, an unexpected champion for the people of Guernica emerged. Pablo Picasso, having read Steer’s report on the atrocity, was moved to create one of his most famous paintings. Titled simply *Guernica*, the

massive scale of the work (it measures more than 25 feet long and 11 feet high), plus the sombre palette of black, greys and white, give the painting a grandeur that has led to it being hailed as one of the finest anti-war paintings of all time. It was displayed at the World’s Fair in Paris, later in 1937.

Controversy has raged ever since the attack on Guernica, with deliberate confusion and misinformation attempting to mask the truth. Franco became dictator of Spain in 1939 and remained in power until his death in 1975. Thousands of left-wing opponents had been executed during the Spanish Civil War and many thousands more followed after Franco assumed power. Some estimates for the death toll during the war and the decade that followed (a period known as the ‘white terror’) reach 200,000 people, with the left-wing intelligentsia particularly targeted. In such an environment, it is hardly surprising that most people would choose simply to never talk about events in the war as they attempted to lead normal lives.

The attack itself paled in comparison to later bombing raids on civilian targets. The Blitz, the fire-bombing of Dresden and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, each with death tolls in the tens of thousands, might make the destruction of a small town seem relatively insignificant. But it was the calculated brutality of the attack on Guernica, the cold planning of how best to terrorise and destroy the civilian population, and the fact that it was perceived as the first such attack on a defenceless civilian target (although Durango had been attacked just days before), that highlighted it in the world’s consciousness, and which continue to do so.

80 years on, Guernica remains a symbol of the dawn of a new and terrible age of total war.





## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# GEORGE FINDLATER

Hit three times under heavy fire, this piper of the Gordon Highlanders inspired his comrades with his war-like strains

WORDS MARK SIMNER

**G**eorge Frederick Findlater, a native of Aberdeenshire, was a mere 25 years of age when he took part in the storming of the Dargai Heights on 20 October 1897. It would be the second time the position was assaulted in three days however, unlike the previous action of the 18th, the young piper would be in the thick of some of the most bitter fighting of the entire Tirah campaign. Although he was wounded three times and remained under heavy fire throughout, the Gordon Highlander bravely continued to play his bagpipes in an effort to encourage his comrades.

Despite the objections of his parents, Findlater had enlisted in the British Army at Aberdeen on 7 April 1888. Joining the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, he would be sent to Ceylon where, in 1891, he would subsequently transfer to the 1st Battalion. Later, in 1894, Findlater found himself in India, experiencing his first taste of action on the inhospitable North West Frontier, when his regiment attacked the Malakand Pass during the Chitral campaign of 1895. With the campaign over, the young piper would receive the India Medal 1895-1902 with a 'Relief of Chitral 1895' clasp.

Although perhaps lost on many at the time, the Chitral campaign had been fought due to British fears of Russian expansionism during the last throes of the so-called 'Great Game'. Russian Cossacks, under the command of a Colonel Yanov, had entered Chitrali territory via one pass and exited it via another, mapping the area as they went. When the Indian authorities learned of this from Lieutenant Francis Younghusband, the intrepid explorer who was carrying out reconnaissance work on and beyond the North West Frontier, there was much alarm throughout government and military circles alike.

Chitral was a potential door to India, and the British wanted it kept shut.

So the British became embroiled in Chitrali affairs, which in turn led to the siege of a small Anglo-Indian garrison at Chitral fort and the subsequent expeditions to relieve it. However, it was the fateful decision to retain a presence in Chitral – in an attempt to block a route to India the Russians might exploit – that led to one of the greatest challenges to British authority in Asia. To maintain political and military forces in Chitral, the British built roads and outposts in the Swat Valley to provide a vital link to Indian territory. Despite the initial lack of resistance from the Pathan tribes of Swat, resentment towards the British presence in the valley steadily grew until the tribesmen, stirred up by fanatical Islamic religious leaders, rose up in open revolt in 1897.

The Pathan rising of '97 was in fact a series of insurrections across sections of the North West Frontier of India. In response, the British launched a number of punitive expeditions against the troublesome tribesmen to force them to give up their revolt and submit to terms. One such expedition, commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir William Lockhart, was sent against the formidable Afridi tribe in the Tirah Valley. It would be for valour during this campaign that Piper George Findlater would later receive the Victoria Cross.

The British successfully took Dargai on the 18 October – a position they subsequently abandoned in a decision that later drew heavy criticism from numerous quarters. It took very little time for the tribesmen to realise the Anglo-Indian troops had vacated Dargai and so they quickly retook it. This then resulted in the need for the British to again assault the position – to prevent leaving an enemy force to their rear as

they advanced – and retake it, a task allocated to Major General Arthur Godolphin Yeatman-Biggs, who commanded 2nd Division of the Tirah Field Force. One of the infantry regiments present for the attack would be the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, in which was Piper Findlater.

Dargai itself was in fact a village located at the top of what was described by one witness to events as an 'abrupt cliff'. The precipitous slope gradually fans out into a 'razor-like' spur towards the bottom of the cliff, and it would be up this steep bluff that Findlater and his comrades would have to haul themselves in the face of heavy fire from above. The village was destroyed on the 18 October, but the Afridi tribesmen had positioned themselves in the ruins of the settlement and, in particular, lining the crest of the heights.

Viewing the reoccupied heights, Yeatman-Biggs issued orders to Brigadier General Francis James Kempster, who commanded 3rd Brigade of 2nd Division, that simply read: "Take the position." In turn, the brigadier general issued his own orders for a frontal assault, which would take the form of the 1/2nd Gurkhas to the front with the Dorsetshire Regiment in support. As a reserve, Kempster kept the Derbyshire Regiment, which had been detached from 1st Division, and the Gordons – as well as a detachment of Maxim machine guns – in readiness to reinforce the leading battalions if needed. As the Gurkhas and Dorsets advanced, both the Derbys and Gordons were to pour rifle fire onto the heights.

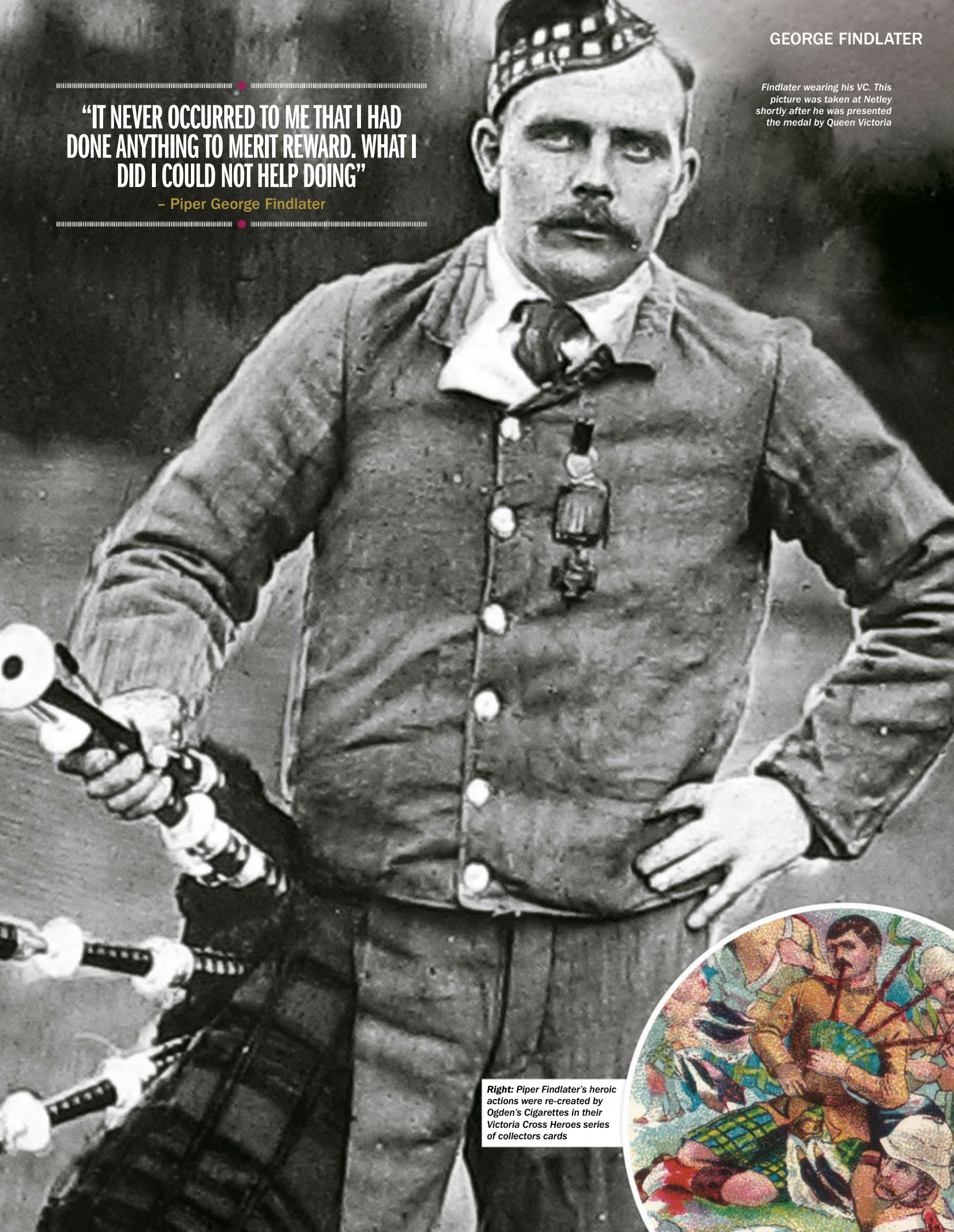
The action began at around 9.30am when the defending tribesmen fired the first shots. Despite this, the British waited another 30 minutes before returning the fire, the first shots of which were fired by the guns of the mountain batteries. At around the same time,



**"IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME THAT I HAD  
DONE ANYTHING TO MERIT REWARD. WHAT I  
DID I COULD NOT HELP DOING"**

**– Piper George Findlater**

*Findlater wearing his VC. This  
picture was taken at Netley  
shortly after he was presented  
the medal by Queen Victoria*



**Right:** Piper Findlater's heroic  
actions were re-created by  
Ogden's Cigarettes in their  
Victoria Cross Heroes series  
of collectors cards





## HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

*Black-and-white drawing from a period newspaper depicting the Gordons and Gurkhas assaulting the Dargai Heights*





about 10.30am, the 1/2nd Gurkhas began their advance and the supporting infantrymen opened fire with their rifles. The second storming of Dargai was now well underway.

Totally exposed to the heavy fire of the enemy, the Gurkhas made a dash across the open plain in front of them, but within a matter of minutes more than 30 of them lay dead or wounded.

Eventually the men managed to cross some 100 yards of ground before reaching cover from the fierce fusillade above, but not before incurring yet more casualties in the process.

Following were the men of the Dorsets and Derbys, who now had to make the same dash across what was later termed the 'death zone'. As they did so, they also came under intense fire that inflicted terrible casualties upon the two regiments, the men of which quickly became mixed up. The attack on the Dargai heights appeared to be going badly for the British.

Meanwhile, the Gordons and the 3rd Sikhs were given orders to prepare to join the stalled assault on the ridge. Turning to his Highlanders, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Harding Mathias shouted "The general says the position must be taken at all costs. The Gordon Highlanders will take it!" At that, the whole battalion rushed forward across the death zone while the pipers played their bagpipes. Shortly after the action, it was said that the pipers played *Cock O' The North* as the men advanced, but according to Findlater they in fact played the quicker strathspey *The Haughs O' Cromdale*.

Casualties among the Highlanders soon began to mount, with officers and men alike being hit by the furious fire of the Pathan marksmen above. Lieutenant Kenneth Dingwall of the regiment was struck by a bullet to his revolver, the force of which knocked him to the ground. Getting back up onto his feet, the unfortunate officer was hit again, this time taking a bullet to his cartridge pouch, causing the contents to explode.

Of the five pipers, two were killed and the other three wounded. Later, it was suggested

**"...THEY SHOUT, THE OFFICERS  
WAVING THEIR SWORDS TO  
THOSE BEHIND; WHILE PIPER  
FINDLATER, THOUGH WOUNDED  
AND UNABLE TO MOVE, STILL  
INSPIRES THEM WITH HIS WAR-  
LIKE STRAINS"**

– Lieutenant Colonel C Greenhill Gardyne

that the noise of their bagpipes attracted the attention of the tribesmen, who then attempted to single out the musicians.

One of the wounded was George Findlater who was hit no less than three times. According to his Victoria Cross citation, Findlater was "shot through both feet and unable to stand." However, he was in fact wounded by a bullet in the left foot, another hit his chanter while the third smashed his right ankle.

Falling to the ground, about three-quarters of the way across the death zone, Findlater propped himself up and continued to play his pipes in the hope it would encourage his comrades to continue their advance and ultimately take the heights. Throughout his playing, Pathan bullets whipped around him, hitting the ground and ricocheting off rocks.

Soon the Gordons, with men of the Gurkhas, Dorsets and Derbys, managed to gain the crest of the ridge and the Afridi defenders broke and fled the field. Dargai was once again in the hands of the British, but the victory had come at the price of 38 killed and 157 wounded. As was often the case during frontier warfare, the number of Pathan casualties were unknown.

Only one of the pipers, John Kidd, made it to the top of the heights and after the action, a correspondent hearing about the act of valour mistakenly took Lance-Corporal Patrick Milne, the lead piper, as the man who had kept playing his pipes despite his wounds. However, Milne later informed the correspondent that it was in fact Piper Findlater who deserved the recognition for bravery.

Findlater was sent back to Rawalpindi to receive medical treatment for his wounds, after which he was invalided home for convalescence at the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley. It would be in the hospital that, on 14 May 1898, Queen Victoria personally presented Piper Findlater with his Victoria Cross. Unfortunately for the young musician, he would not recover sufficiently from his wounds to be able to continue his military service, and so six days after receiving his award he was discharged from the army.

Unlike many discharged from the Victorian army as medically unfit, post-service life for Findlater was relatively comfortable. In addition to his £10 a year pension (granted for being a recipient of the VC), he would be lionized by the British public and earn as much as £100 a week for performances in Empire Palace theatres, the latter of which attracted criticism from Parliament. However, following the outbreak of World War I, he would return to military life by enlisting into the 9th Battalion of his former regiment, rising to the rank of piper-sergeant before again being invalided out of the army in December 1915.

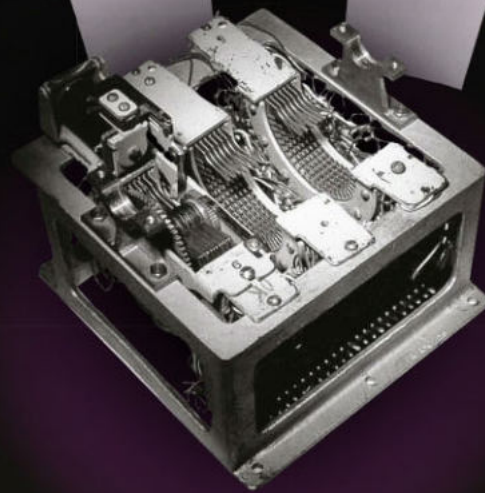
Findlater died of a heart attack on 4 March 1942, aged 70, and is buried in Forglan Cemetery in Turriff, Scotland. His medals are currently on display at the National War Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh Castle.

"Piper Findlater, after being shot through both feet and unable to stand, sat up, under a heavy fire, playing the Regimental March to encourage the charge of the Gordon Highlanders." – VC Citation, London Gazette, 20 May 1898.



Colour period image depicting a wounded Findlater playing his bagpipes to encourage his fellow Gordons in their storming of Dargai





# PURPLE

## CRACKING JAPAN'S ENIGMA

How codebreakers across the Atlantic came to decrypt messages quicker than the enemy could themselves

WORDS NATHAN JORDAN



**A**t around 12pm on Saturday 6 December 1941, the Japanese Government in Tokyo instructed its ambassador to the USA, Kichisaburo Nomura, to stand by for a 14-part message. He was ordered to present it to the secretary of state at 1pm the following day, after which he was to destroy the coding machine the message was received on.

Given that it was a weekend, Nomura's Technical Support staff were away, so he and a fellow diplomat had to decode and transcribe the message themselves. The end result was a message that amounted to a Japanese declaration of war, and was delivered after the planned attack on Pearl Harbor, where more than 2,000 sailors were killed and 18 ships were destroyed. The delays in the delivery of the message meant all those killed were officially non-combatants. The Japanese diplomats seemingly had no prior knowledge of the pending attack.

Astonishingly, the officials also had no knowledge that the message they presented to the Secretary of State had already been intercepted by a Navy Station on Bainbridge Island, where despite being protected by Japan's most sophisticated cipher machine, it was rendered into English by the US Signals Intelligence Service (SIS).

Tragic delays meant that the intercepts and decoding didn't take place in time to prevent the attack, nor did any intercepted messages reveal plans to attack Pearl Harbor specifically.

### Purple haze

The cipher machine used to encode the message to Ambassador Nomura was known as the 97-shiki O-bun In-ji-ki (97 Alphabetical Typewriter). The number for the device was derived from the year 2597, according to the Japanese Imperial calendar, in which the device was built (or 1937 Common Era).

The 'Purple' machine, as it was known in the USA, was a successor to the previous 'Red' cipher machine, which in turn was based on a commercial version of the infamous German Enigma machine. Collectively the information gleaned from Japanese intercepts was codenamed 'Magic' – material that was placed into colour-coded binders, hence the names.

Unlike Red, which used half rotors that required cleaning daily, Purple made use of more-reliable telephone stepping switches. In brief, the Purple machine consisted of two electric typewriters, joined by a cryptographic assembly for encoding/decoding messages.

The second typewriter could print messages onto a piece of paper, which was a colossal improvement on early Enigma machines that used lamps to spell out the message. This meant that no second operator was required to transcribe messages as they were received. Another advantage of the Purple machines was that they could send and receive messages both in English and Romaji, a system for writing Japanese in the Roman Alphabet.

Theoretically the level of security offered by Purple was very high, as the initial settings, including the rotor positions and dual plugboards, offered more than 70 trillion combinations for the initial settings.

As much as the Japanese believed Purple to be secure, the plugboards and typewriters combined with printing apparatus resulted in a rather bulky machine that made it impracticable for the field, so it was reserved for high level diplomatic communication.

It was this, rather than the complexity of the machine itself, which initially stymied the efforts of SIS, who had started monitoring Purple traffic since it first appeared in February 1939. Codebreaking to date had relied on the fact that after sending thousands of messages with the same key settings, cipher machines would repeat sequences of

**“TRAGIC DELAYS MEANT THAT THE INTERCEPTS AND DECODING DIDN'T TAKE PLACE IN TIME TO PREVENT THE ATTACK”**



Members of the SIS posed in front of their vault, 1935. Present are William Friedman (centre, standing) and Frank Rowlett (far right)



*Japan's alliance with Germany led to unintentional intelligence leaks once Purple had been cracked*

letters, which was less likely to happen with occasional diplomatic cables. As such, it wasn't until 1940 that Purple transmissions could be broken and read regularly.

The Japanese also did not rely on the Purple machine alone to protect their messages. To encipher a message, a clerk would firstly encode it using a commercially available cipher known as the 'Phillips Code'. This wasn't to obfuscate the message, so much as to save time by shortening common terms, for instance the word 'execute' is converted to 'Xk'.

The clerk would then select a letter sequence from a book of 1,000 codes that were changed daily to determine the machine plugboard's initial settings, as well as choosing at random from another list of 240 separate settings, which would decide the keys used by the stepping switches.

## Breaking Purple

The 18-month effort to break Purple was spearheaded by William Friedman, who set up a special team named the 'Purple Section'

## "UNLIKE THE BRITISH CODEBREAKERS AT BLETCHLEY PARK WHO HELPED BREAK ENIGMA, SIS HAD NO COMMERCIAL MODEL, PHOTOS OR BLUEPRINTS OF THE PURPLE MACHINE"

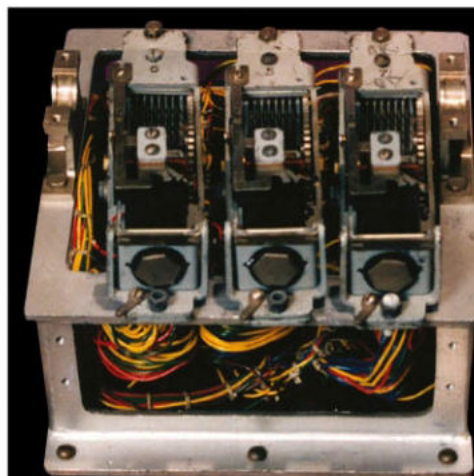
at SIS Headquarters in Constitution Avenue, Washington DC.

Purple Section was led by brilliant mathematician Frank Rowlett, who, while having no experience with codebreaking, eagerly accepted the job, as the salary offered was more than the combined income he and his wife had been earning until then as schoolteachers.

Rowlett's team discovered that like its predecessor, the Purple machine enciphered six of the letters of the alphabet separately to the rest. This allowed Rowlett to draw up a pen-and-paper deciphering chart with various columns displaying the cipher alphabets used. This was a key weakness of Purple, as once six letters of a message have been encoded it was easy to make intelligent guesses about the remaining words.

The rigid, stylised nature of Japanese diplomatic communications, which often contained expressions such as "Your Excellency" made the codebreaking efforts even easier and, like a crossword, as more letters were filled in, SIS was able to decipher more of each message.

The Purple machines were complex, ungainly and expensive, meaning that the Japanese often used the older Red machines for sending the same messages. This was surprising given that the Japanese had built the Purple machine precisely because they suspected Red traffic could be broken by the US. Not only did it make the initial message easier to decode, but it allowed SIS to determine the key settings for the Purple machines more easily, allowing them to decode other messages sent that day.



*This fragment of an original Japanese Type 97 'Purple' cipher machine is on display at the National Security Agency's National Cryptologic Museum located in Fort Meade, Maryland*

## THE EMPEROR'S NEW CODES

### FROM RED AND BLUE TO PURPLE – HOW DID THIS NIGHTMARISH UPGRADE TO ENIGMA CONCEAL JAPANESE TRANSMISSIONS?

The Purple Machine combined two electric typewriters for inputting and printing out messages, meaning a single person could operate it. Pressing a key would send an electrical signal to the cryptographic assembly. This consisted of a plugboard, four electrical coding rings and various wires and switches.

The Enigma plugboard paired letters on its plugboard – for instance the letters E and O might be swapped around. Purple was more fiendish, in that it contained input and output plugboards. This supported any permutation of letters. For instance, the fact that the letter E enciphered as letter O, did not necessarily mean O would decipher to E.

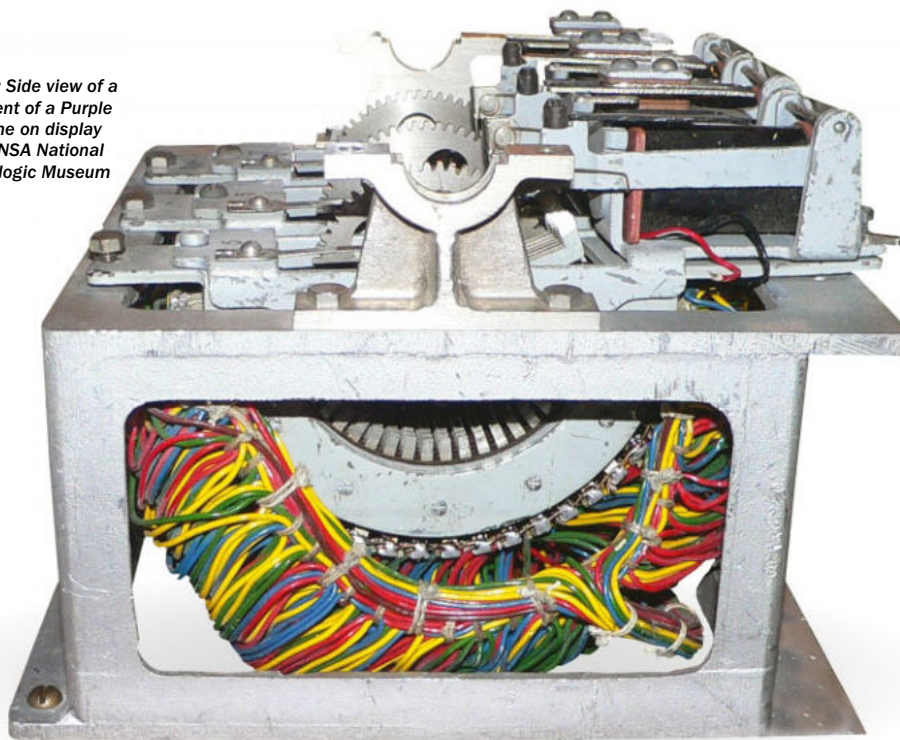
Instead of using clunky rotors that moved with each key press, the Purple Machine used four electro-mechanical 'stepping switches'. The SIS codebreakers assigned the letters S, L, M and R to each of these. Each of them had 25 hard-wired but different permutations of letters.

Like its 'Red' predecessor, Purple divided the letters of the alphabet into two groups. The first group of letters was known as the 'Sixes' and the second group known as the 'Twenties'. The 'Sixes' letters were enciphered using only Switch S – this would move forward exactly one place for each letter typed – while the 'Twenties' letters were enciphered using the other three stepping switches – L, M and R. At least one of these would move one step as each letter is typed. Which switch moved was determined by the movement of the S switch combined with the initial machine settings.

Although this sounds convoluted, the actual process was transparent to the operator who would simply set up the machine according to the settings in the available code book and input each plain text letter. This would then be sent to the plugboard before being enciphered again by the stepping switches.



Below: Side view of a fragment of a Purple machine on display at the NSA National Cryptologic Museum



### Purple Analogue

While the Japanese were obliging enough to encode messages with the Red machine or include predictable words, at first any efforts at codebreaking amounted to little more than guesswork. Had Purple been used for military messages, it's likely that thousands would be sent per day, meaning the initial settings would be easier to calculate because the relationship between sequences of enciphered and 'plain text' letters could be calculated.

Using the small number of diplomatic messages they had access to, Purple Section team member Genevieve Grotjan had a flash of inspiration on 20 September 1940 by discovering repeated sequences in a number of messages – the internal workings of Purple had been solved on paper.

The entire section decided to celebrate quite salubriously by ordering in bottles of Coca Cola for everyone. Grotjan herself was posthumously inducted into the NSA Hall of Honor in 2010 after her death in 2006, for this and other achievements. Unfortunately, the strain of the past 18 months proved too much for William Friedman who suffered a nervous breakdown and was forced to rest for several months.

In Friedman's absence, MIT-educated army officer and engineer Leo Rosen used paper diagrams from Rowlett, Grotjan and Friedman himself to construct an exact working replica of Purple that mirrored the wiring of the machine.

This device was actually an improvement on a prototype machine devised by Rosen. He formed the idea for this first device, dubbed the "six buster" while leafing through an electrical supply catalogue. As he idly turned the pages he came across a device known as the 'uniselect' which consisted of six telephone stepping switches. Thanks to the efforts of Grotjan and the rest of Purple Section, the wiring for the other 20 letters of the alphabet was now plain, allowing Rosen to build on his original machine by soldering over 500 new connections to various stepping switches.

Unlike the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park who helped break Enigma, SIS had no

commercial model, photos or blueprints of the Purple machine. They inferred everything about the machine's functions from intercepting and decoding its messages.

The new Purple replica was put to good use in decrypting all messages received to date, as it allowed for checking various settings much faster than using pen and paper and in time, six more replica machines were built.

### Aftermath

Once functioning replicas of Purple were available, the task of decoding messages was streamlined, further aided by the predictable way the Japanese sent messages and the fact that they only used 240 possible key settings from a potential pool of nearly 400,000. Purple Section often decoded messages faster than the Japanese Embassies themselves, who knew the correct settings.

Purple traffic wasn't only useful for obtaining intelligence on the Japanese. Ambassador Baron Hiroshi Oshima, a confidant of Hitler's, served as an unwitting collaborator with the Allied cause by making visits to the Eastern Front and Atlantic Wall. As a dogged and routine military man, the former general provided painstakingly detailed reports on Nazi leadership plans, as well as the 'TO' Japanese spy network in Spain by radio to Tokyo, which were eagerly deciphered by Purple Section.

Although Japanese faith in the security of Purple was unshaken, before surrendering, their government sent covert orders to their Embassies to destroy all Purple machines by grinding them to particles. A fragment of one was recovered from the Japanese Embassy in Berlin at the end of the War. The former Purple Section were astonished to discover it used the very same component Leo Rosen had selected for SIS's replica machine while leafing through his electronics catalogue years ago.

This uncanny coincidence is not only a testament to Purple Section but underscores the combination of brute effort, coincidence and raw mathematical skill that were needed to break wartime codes.

## AMERICA'S CODE-CRACKER

### MEET THE 'DEAN' OF MODERN AMERICAN CRYPTOLOGY

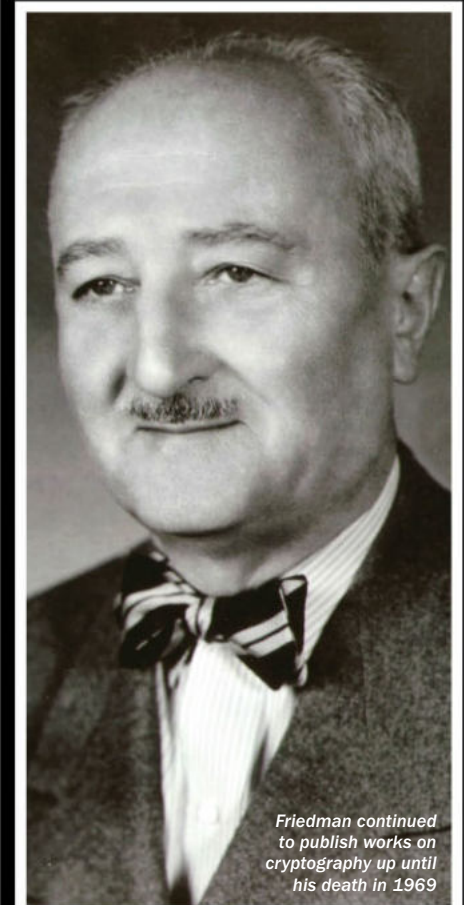
After breaking field codes used by the Germans in World War I in 1920, William Friedman penned his first of many revolutionary codebreaking manuals, *The Index Of Coincidence And Its Applications In Cryptography*. It detailed a technique known as 'coincidence counting', which would later be applied to breaking Purple.

In 1923 while working as chief cryptanalyst for the War Department, he published *Elements Of Cryptanalysis*, a manual that would later be expanded into a four-volume work. It rapidly became the US Army's cryptographic Bible.

In 1924, at the request of the Navy, Friedman tackled messages from a five-rotor cipher machine invented by Californian Edward Hebern. Friedman was able to crack messages by printing the letters on strips of paper, then sliding them back and forth until he observed 'coincidences' in one column or another.

After the strain of breaking Purple told on Friedman, he was hospitalised in 1941 and was honourably retired from the Signal Corps reserve. He continued to serve as director of communications for SIS and after the war became chief of the technical division for the Armed Forces Security Agency. He then served as a technical consultant for the fledgling NSA in 1952. It was only after this move that the US Government realised that due to an oversight, Friedman never actually had full security clearance.

In 1946, President Truman awarded Friedman the Medal of Merit for, "exceptionally meritorious conduct." For obvious reasons the exact nature of his contributions couldn't have been made public at the time.



Friedman continued to publish works on cryptography up until his death in 1969

Images: Getty, Thinkstock





**“THE WAR BEGAN WITH SMALL RIOTS AS GROUPS OF HOOLIGANS – BOTH RUSSIAN AND MOLDOVAN – CLASHED REPEATEDLY OVER MANY WEEKS”**



The town of Cosnita saw some fiercest fighting between Transnistria and Moldova during the 1992 war

## BRIEFING

# Transnistria

Unrecognised by the world, one belligerent state has thrived under Moscow's shadowy patronage but exists frozen between the past and modernity

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

**A**fter the tyrant Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were executed by firing squad on Christmas Day, 1989, the nation they once ruled shed its ideological trappings and welcomed the future with open arms. The euphoria and exuberance that swept Romania was far from singular. Elsewhere – in Poland and the former East Germany, Albania and Yugoslavia, the Baltic statelets and across the once sombre corner of Europe the world called the Eastern Bloc – a clamour for freedom and democracy rang out with explosive force.

Even the Soviet Union, haemorrhaging from years of aimless Perestroika, felt its very foundations quake. Yet it was in tiny Soviet Moldavia where a newfound zest for national spirit caused much consternation. The Moldavians were reaching back to their heritage and celebrating kinship with the Romanians.

When it came to language, faith and history, the Moldavians had more in common with their western neighbours than the dull Soviet citizenry living among them. This was terrible news in the shared border with Soviet Ukraine that traced the course of the Dniester River. Here lived a sizable populace of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians along with industries vital to the foundering Warsaw Pact.

The outrages continued throughout 1989. Laws were passed that abolished the Cyrillic alphabet from public life, replacing it with the Latin alphabet for the Romanian language. The final straw came in May 1990 when Moldavia changed its official name. It was now the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova.

This was too much for the ethnic Russians who lived across the Dniester River. For nearly two centuries, the territory now calling itself Moldova was under Russian control. This allowed the tsars to encroach on Balkan affairs and champion Pan-Slavic nationalism. But in the last decade of the 20th century, it was obvious that Moscow's unassailable influence was crumbling.

The demographics of the new country, Moldova, weren't as homogenous as it appeared. Romanian-speaking Moldovans were the majority, but they shared their lives with a sizable population of Ukrainians, Russians, Gypsies, Jews, Armenians and even the Turkic Gagauz.

In September 1990, however, local nationalists declared the secession of their own Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic. Tracing the serpentine bends of the Dniester River near Ukraine (what the Russians called the Nistru River), the faux-state marked the emancipation of local Russians from their former compatriots, but in reality, just like Moldova, Ukrainians and Gagauz also lived in this rebellious realm. Though this rising was really a Russian initiative backed by unabashed aggression by Moscow, for the Moldovans the emergence of renegade Transnistria posed an existential threat to their young republic.

The war began with small riots as groups of hooligans – both Russian and Moldovan – clashed repeatedly over many weeks. The main flashpoints were cities in the east, where Moldova's industrial zones were located. In previous decades, Soviet central planning turned Moldova into a provider of wine and wheat but its location meant specific manufacturing facilities were established as well. Small cities like Dubasari, Bender and Tiraspol became hotbeds of unrest as gangs attempted to seize precincts and government buildings.

The shooting started in 1991. To this day, the circumstances that led to fratricidal civil war are unclear. What is known is that the ethnic tensions between Moldovans and Russians could be what drove either of them to antagonism. Soon enough both sides managed to acquire sufficient arms, a development aided by the slow withdrawal of Soviet forces from Moldova. Perhaps in the chaos of their exit, sufficient stores of weapons and ammunition reached the belligerents.

But in a pattern that was eerily repeated in eastern Ukraine 23 years later, a local rebellion

## ROMANIAN OR RUSSIAN?

**1806**

With Napoleon carving up Central Europe, Russia seeks to control the Balkans and invades Bessarabia and Wallachia. This starts a long and expensive war with the Ottoman Empire.

**1812**

After the Treaty of Bucharest is signed, a war-weary Russia and the Ottoman Empire split the Principality of Moldavia between them. This puts much of Bessarabia under permanent Russian control.

**1859**

With the Ottoman Empire weak and ailing, the Balkan nations strive for independence. Wallachia leads the way in 1859 and two years later, it forms a union with Transylvania.





led by ethnic Russians triggered a genuine military intervention directed by Moscow.

As the conflict dragged on it became apparent that Russian forces were fighting alongside the Transnistrians. How else could you explain the tanks and APCs that the local 'rebels' were suddenly operating? It was too convenient for weapons and equipment from what used to be the Soviet 14th Army, spread among bases in Moldova and Ukraine, to be in Transnistrian hands. The war reached its peak in June 1992. Around the same time, the former Yugoslavia was engulfed in its own civil wars and the Moldovan conflict threatened to draw in its neighbours.

It was General Alexander Lebed, a veteran of the elite VDV or airborne branch of the Russian armed forces, who led a single battalion into the embattled Transnistria. Officially, his orders were to act as peacekeeper and resolve the conflict. Unofficially, he and the troops under his command galvanised the Transnistrian forces, bolstered their defences and dealt a decisive blow to the fledgling Moldovan opposition. All this was achieved with a considerable amount of artillery taken from former Soviet stocks. An uneasy peace settled over Transnistria by the end of July 1992 and Lebed, hailed as a local hero, would go on to fight in Chechnya.

Hardened by tours in Afghanistan and the Caucasus before the Soviet Union's collapse, after the Moldovan civil war, Lebed helped negotiate the ceasefire that allowed the Russian Federation's troops to leave Grozny after years of gruelling combat. He would try his luck in politics after losing a presidential run to Boris Yeltsin in 1996, and then settle for governing one of Russia's largest oblasts or provinces. A pariah once Vladimir Putin had risen to power before the turn of the century, Lebed's life was cut short by a freak accident – a helicopter crash – in 2002.

Meanwhile, the fragile peace that remained in Transnistria was held together by a collection of Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan army units. It was soon apparent the Russians played the greatest role in keeping Transnistria, desperately poor and with no natural resources, intact. The question is, why?

### The little principality

When the long series of Russo-Turkic wars began in earnest during the 18th and 19th centuries, a small frontier territory called Bessarabia was wrested away from the Ottomans without too much effort. This set a new pattern in the collective destiny of the Moldavian people. Firmly within the Russian sphere, their land would be trampled on whenever the future of the Balkans was at stake.

This is what happened when Romania won its freedom from the Turks in 1859. Threatened

by a potential attack from the south – where Bulgaria was still firmly under the Ottoman administration – more effort was put to improve ties with Saint Petersburg and solicit military assistance than bother with the 'Russified' Moldavians, who were ethnically Romanian yet separated by the dictates of geopolitics.

It wasn't until the aftermath of WWI when the fall of the Hapsburgs, the Romanovs and the Ottoman Sultans brought forth new countries imperilled by uncertainty. A genuine Moldavian republic emerged in 1918 but in a matter of years, it was annexed by an expanding Romania. In 1924, another short-lived Moldavian state arose sponsored by Ukrainian Soviets and its borders traced the Russian Pridnestrovie that arose in the 1990s.

Greater Bessarabia enjoyed a generation of relative peace that was soon broken by the build-up to WWII. The Molotov-Ribbentrop nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany allowed the Soviets to scoop up Moldavian Bessarabia as an appendage to its breadbasket, the Ukraine. In 1941, it was overrun by Romanian forces operating alongside Wehrmacht and SS divisions. By 1944, the tide had turned and Bessarabia was in Soviet hands again.

As the Third Reich's desperate Eastern Front began to crumble beneath the onslaught of the Soviet war machine, the catastrophic impact of losing its Romanian oil fields forced a suicidal defence to slow the enemy onslaught. The entire Heeresgruppe Süd, or Army Group Southern Ukraine, was sacrificed with dismal results. Combined Romanian and German divisions weren't enough to stem the oncoming tide and during the summer of 1944, 1 million Soviets poured across the Dniester River in two great columns that were like monstrous jaws of fire and steel.



A Transnistrian separatist, molotov cocktails at the ready, keeps watch for Moldovan troops



T-64s roll through Tiraspol during a Transnistrian military parade

**1918**

The end of WWI and the Russian Empire's collapse lead to Moldavia's short-lived independence. Landlocked and populated by ethnic Romanians, it's annexed by its mother country and enjoys peace.

**1940**

The Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact of 1939 cedes Bessarabia to the Soviet Union.

The territory is begrudgingly surrendered by Romania on 26 June the following year after an ultimatum from Moscow.

**1944**

In August, Soviet troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts retake Bessarabia from German and Romanian forces. By 12 September, Romania signs an armistice and allies with the Soviets.

**1965**

Nicolae Ceausescu seizes power in Romania and casts himself as an intermediary between the West and the Soviet Union. His long rule becomes an embarrassment to his country when a long economic decline begins in the mid-1970s.

**1987**

Its economy reeling from mismanagement and corruption, the Soviet Union's leaders realise systemic change must take place. To this end, Mikhail Gorbachev rolls out a broad program of economic reforms – Perestroika.





Right: Transnistrian airborne troops in combat gear

**“STRETCHING MORE THAN 4,000 KILOMETRES BETWEEN THE BORDERS OF MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE, TRANSNISTRIA IS ONE OF THE MOST RIDICULOUS REPUBLICS TO EVER EXIST”**

The Soviets smashed through local defences in record time and imposed their terms in Bucharest before the year ended. Among the spoils was the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, once again a Russian prize, and upon its wreckage Stalin imposed a new order for the latest appendage to the USSR's growing constellation of vassal states.

Remarkably, Soviet Moldavia enjoyed decades of uninterrupted peace. Of course, this was guaranteed by membership in the Soviet Union. But owing to the 14th Army and its bases, the republic was an armed camp that would serve as a springboard should a full-blown war with NATO start in the near future.

This is why, in the aftermath of the civil war from 1990-93 that was decided by a timely Russian intervention, Transnistria completed its transformation from an unremarkable slice of geography to a Soviet throwback that appeared out of place in a fast changing continent.

Stretching more than 4,000 kilometres between the borders of Moldova and Ukraine, Transnistria is one of the most ridiculous republics to ever exist. Never recognised by the EU, the UN, the United States or any of its neighbours, it exists as a blight on Moldova – one of the poorest countries in Europe – and as a potential fault line in a near future conflict.

During the first two decades of its existence, Transnistria was led by the charismatic President Igor Smirnov, whose nostalgia for Soviet governance meant he ruled Tiraspol with an iron fist. Smirnov's legacy to his people was a suffocating domestic security apparatus of local spies, thuggish police officers and a crude social contract involving a dismal pension system. If you're a senior citizen in Transnistria, the government will give you a pension paid in local roubles.

President Smirnov's long incumbency is best described as a succession of bad news. As a rogue state with a meagre population, Transnistria's formal economy never flourished.

It's not surprising that, for years, claims of rampant smuggling and arms trafficking were always tacked onto the Transnistrian capital. With no oversight from any law enforcement except its own local police, it was believed every type of shady character in the Balkans and beyond could hide out in Transnistria. During the 2000s, with the world gripped by fear of extremist terrorism, the country was tied to an elaborate conspiracy involving rockets with depleted uranium warheads. Of course, the rumours were never verified but they did highlight the fact that the breakaway republic possessed a baffling arsenal that it never took responsibility for.

The Smirnov era came to an end in 2011 when another local politician, Yevgeny Shevchuk, assumed the presidency after peaceful elections. The same was repeated in 2016 when Shevchuk

**1989**

The Moldovan Popular Front emerges as a platform for dissenters and opponents of the Communist government. A nationalist Romania-centric wave emerges that agitates for full Moldovan independence from the Soviet Union.

**1989**

On 25 December, Nicolas and Elena Ceausescu are executed by a three-man firing squad. Romania is finally rid of its dictator and begins its long transition away from a socialist economy.



**1990**

Alarmed by resurgent Moldovan nationalism, Transnistria secedes from the motherland on 2 September after a similar move by the Gagauz minority in the south. Moldova is now at risk of collapsing.

**1991**

Moldova declares its independence on 27 August. Clashes immediately break out between armed gangs and Moldovan troops in the eastern half of the country. A civil war begins the following month.





bowed out to Vadim Krasnoselski. These humourless leaders appear cut from the same mould; taciturn, fierce and always on message when advertising their adulation for the Kremlin.

Transnistria's awful relationship with Moldova, a pauper state getting by on remittances from its citizens working abroad, was almost resolved in 2003 when a well-meaning Russian diplomat, Dmitry Kozak, attempted to negotiate a settlement that would end the long impasse. But the treaty, which required the creation of a federal system in Moldova granting the Transnistrians complete autonomy, was so controversial it inspired angry protests in Chisinau. Denounced by Moldovan politicians and frowned upon by the EU, the deal fell apart, infuriating Moscow, whose generous cash and gas subsidies had been keeping Tiraspol afloat through many lean years.

Moscow's grip on Transnistria is unmistakable and could be the single reason why no diplomatic solution has been reached yet. Aside from a permanent Russian presence in a military base outside Tiraspol, Moscow trains and equips a small local militia modelled on Russian mechanised infantry units. Portraits and billboards of Vladimir Putin are ubiquitous in public spaces and offices, while monuments to the Great Patriotic War are upheld and sacrosanct. During a referendum in 2006, an overwhelming majority of those who voted preferred total independence from Moldova followed by a union with the Russian Federation, an outcome that would turn Transnistria into something like lonesome Kaliningrad along the Baltic.

## A Russian island

Given its penchant for secrecy, there's an alarming shortage of credible intelligence on Transnistria's domestic affairs. Other than Moscow and EU bureaucrats worried about smuggling, not many people know about what goes on over the length of this Russian enclave. What can be learned from available research is disappointing. A modest population of 500,000 to 700,000 citizens and the decrepit local economy offers few prospects for bilateral trade. True to the post-Soviet mould, it's a dystopian republic filled with relics from its immediate past, tank monuments and Lenin statues galore, and is a microcosmic police state.

**"THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN TRANSNISTRIA IS GENERALLY AWFUL, WITH MANUFACTURING ON A STEADY DECLINE SINCE THE 2000s"**



US Marines conduct joint operations with the Moldovan military as the UN tries to check Russian aggression



Cossacks pose with an icon of Tsar Nicholas II and his family. The cossacks supported the Russian-speaking Transnistrians fighting against Moldovan forces in 1992



**1992**

Hostilities between Moldova and Transnistria end. Chisinau doesn't have the resources to continue the war and at least 6,000 Russian troops have entered the breakaway region. A permanent stalemate ensues.

**2001**

With the Second Chechen War raging and relations with Moldova more or less smooth, Russia begins a partial withdrawal of its Transnistrian peacekeepers. But a token force remains to guard Tiraspol.

**2002**

Having transitioned to politics, Alexander Lebed is appointed governor of Krasnoyarsk. On 28 April, the Mi-8 helicopter he and his retinue are flying in gets snagged by a power cable and crashes. Lebed is killed.



**2003**

Russia sends an envoy, Dmitry Kozak, to arrange a resolution for the Moldova-Transnistria conflict. The so-called Kozak Memorandum falls apart when EU observers object to its demand for full Transnistrian autonomy.

**2006**

16 years after it declared its separation from Moldova, a referendum is held in Transnistria. The poll results showed 96 per cent rejected union with Moldova while a staggering 98 per cent favoured independence.





**Above:** Transnistrian special forces demonstrate their marksmanship skills to the military high command

A baffling bit of unsubstantiated trivia claims at least 100,000 citizens are spies for the local KGB. What is certain, however, is that tourists are under constant surveillance and may or may not be harassed for taking photos in or around Parliament Building in Tiraspol, the orderly capital where life seems to move at a slower pace.

The economic situation in Transnistria is generally awful, with manufacturing on a steady decline since the 2000s. Having to support pensions and salaries is a drain on the government's coffers and for decades now, Transnistria has depended on Moscow's beneficence to cover gas deliveries and a frightening deficit.

In the 20 years since Russian forces imposed a tenuous peace, the only sign of progress during President Ivan Smirnov's long tenure was a multimillion-dollar soccer stadium for the local football club. The massive complex, which includes a luxury hotel, was funded by Sheriff, a Transnistrian business conglomerate whose activities span exports, imports, petrol stations and convenience stores. It's an unexpected success in the least conceivable setting for unfettered capitalism.

What Europe must do with Transnistria remains a matter of guesswork. Only intrepid travellers bother visiting, no doubt to scratch it off their bucket lists – with Tiraspol being one of the continent's last true exotic destinations.

Yet Transnistria's very existence bodes ill for its neighbours and the reasons why are worth thinking about. First is Transnistria's unflinching alignment with Moscow. In a rather comedic twist, what most scares its neighbours (Moldova and Ukraine) is the Soviet-era arms depot in a town called Cobasna that's guarded by Russian soldiers. Filled with thousands upon thousands of munitions and high explosives that have been left over from the Cold War, any accident could send a rain of fire in every direction and literally set the surrounding countryside alight.

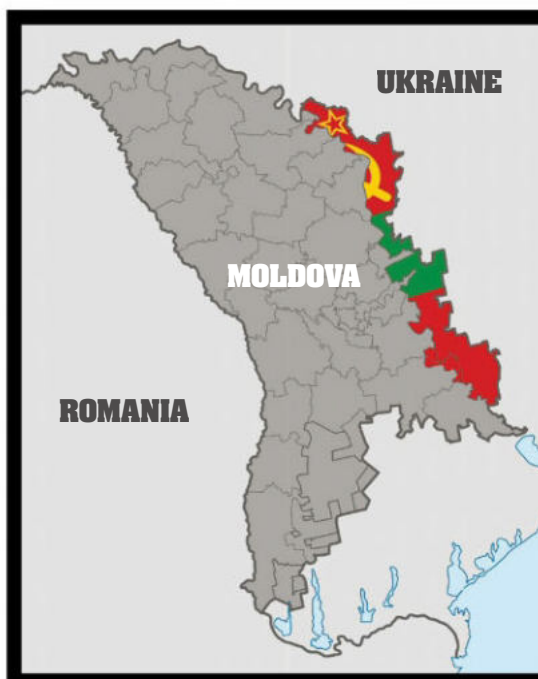
Then, as per the result of its elections in late 2016, there's Transnistria's wish to join the Russian Federation. When it's understood that there are enough facilities in the republic to house and maintain thousands of Russian soldiers, the likelihood becomes scary. Ukrainian officials today, fully aware another variety of Transnistrian separatism is playing out in the Donetsk Oblast, must be consumed by fear at the thought of being trapped in a Russian vice.

Perhaps most fearsome of all is the possibility Russia could once again force the Balkans to its orbit. As history shows, for this to happen Ukraine, Moldova and Bulgaria must be pried from the grasp of the West. This clears a path to a Russian foothold in Hungary and the doorstep of Central Europe, just like during the Cold War. It's a scenario that NATO commanders find very troubling.

Imagine how many destructive possibilities are hinged on Transnistria's future. Unimportant in peacetime yet vital in our new era of rabid nationalism and distrust, this small police state could be the short fuse of a European powder keg.



**Above:** Transnistrian paratroopers parade during a military sports festival, 2016



## MOSCOW'S LONG SHADOW

One of the more ominous actors in the Transnistria standoff is the 1,500 Russian 'peacekeepers' permanently garrisoned in the rogue territory. Without a serious outbreak of violence in 20 years, the reason for their presence is somewhat dubious. Besides, Moldova is too poor to prosecute a war and Tiraspol can barely afford its own army. Perhaps, one theory goes, they're supposed to guard defunct Soviet munitions depots.

### 2016

In December, Vadim Krasnoselski is declared the winner of Transnistria's national elections. Like his predecessors, Yevgeny Shevchuk and Igor Smirnov, he promises closer ties with Moscow and Eurasia.





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The Hughes OH-6 light observation helicopter (LOH) earned the nickname 'Loach' during the Vietnam War due to its military designation



**A**n iconic combat platform of the Vietnam War with a basic design that proved so durable and utilitarian that it is still in service today, the Hughes OH-6 Cayuse light observation helicopter has performed a variety of roles in war and peace. Its variants have participated in covert and conventional military operations, while civilian versions set records for speed and endurance with substantial lift and load capacity.

According to Technical Specification 153 issued in 1960, the US Army required a light observation helicopter (LOH) capable of transport, evacuation, observation and ground support. Subsequently, designs submitted by Fairchild-Hiller and Bell aviation companies were chosen from a dozen entries. A latecomer to the competition was the Hughes Tool Company Aircraft Division's Model 369. The enterprise, owned by tycoon Howard Hughes, developed a prototype that flew for the first time on 27 February 1963, designated the YHO-6A and later the YOH-6A.

As the prototypes vied for the lucrative government contract to produce the new LOH, the Bell YOH-4 was eliminated due to its underpowered engine. Ultimately, Hughes won the Army contract in the spring of 1965, underbidding Fairchild-Hiller at \$19,700 per airframe amid accusations that the bids were not comparable due to introduction of a Fairchild-Hiller boosted control system in its YOH-5A prototype, which raised the price per unit somewhat. Hughes had also taken the risk of bidding below his company's actual cost, hoping that future large contracts would move the overall production effort to profitability.

The army awarded Hughes a contract for 714 airframes without engines and later increased the order to 1,300 with another 114 under option. Hughes offered to build 2,700 additional airframes in 1968; however, amid complaints from Fairchild-Hiller, the army was compelled to open bidding to competitors. Hughes lost that contract to Bell, but the OH-6 was already becoming a legend.

**“VARIANTS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN COVERT AND CONVENTIONAL MILITARY OPERATIONS, WHILE CIVILIAN VERSIONS SET RECORDS FOR SPEED AND ENDURANCE”**

## SPECIFICATIONS

**COMMISSIONED:** 1966  
**ORIGIN:** UNITED STATES  
**LENGTH:** 9.4 METERS (30.84 FEET)  
**RANGE:** 430 KILOMETRES (267 MILES)  
**ENGINE:** ALLISON T63-A-5A TURBOSHAFT  
**CREW:** 2  
**PRIMARY WEAPON:** 2X M60 7.62MM MACHINE GUNS OR M134 MINIGUNS  
**SECONDARY WEAPON:** 2X 70MM ROCKET PODS; TOW/HELLFIRE MISSILE PODS

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

# HUGHES OH-6 CAYUSE

The Hughes OH-6 Cayuse light observation helicopter gained the nickname 'Loach' in the military, and variants remain in service today



**"THE ENGINE DELIVERED 250 SHAFT HORSEPOWER WITH A STEADY RATE OF CLIMB AT 10.5 METRES (2,067 FEET) PER SECOND"**

A modified version of the original Allison 250 turboshaft engine, the Allison T63-A-5A was configured to better prevent fires

## ENGINE

The Allison T63-A-5A turboshaft engine was paired with the prototype of the OH-6A military variant of the Hughes OH-6 Cayuse helicopter, popularly known as the Loach. The T63-A-5A was a modified version of the original Allison Model 250, with the exhaust pointing upward to avoid grass fires or the ignition of other nearby combustible materials. The Model 250 was developed in the early 1960s and spawned nearly 50 variants. The engine delivered 250 shaft horsepower with a steady rate of climb at 10.5 metres (2,067 feet) per second. The T63-A-5A production run was part of nearly 30,000 Model 250 engines manufactured.

*Left: The rear of the crew compartment reveals the terminus of the classic teardrop design*





Mounted on the 'Loach,' this 7.62mm M134 rotary machine gun, or 'minigun' is lethal in an anti-personnel role

**"THE PRIMARY WEAPONS OF THE LOACH WERE A PAIR OF 7.62MM M60C MACHINE GUNS OR 7.62MM M134 ROTARY GUNS POPULARLY KNOWN AS 'MINIGUNS'"**

## ARMAMENT

In fire-suppression and ground-support roles, the primary weapons of the Loach were a pair of 7.62mm M60C machine guns or 7.62mm M134 rotary guns popularly known as 'miniguns'. The M134 was commonly mounted on a pylon on the left side with the M60C in a flexible mount on the right-side rear door.

Secondary armament included 14 70mm Hydra rockets in twin pods along with the TOW or Hellfire missile systems, effective as anti-personnel or anti-tank weapons. In combat zones, small arms such as the M79 grenade launcher, hand grenades and the M16 rifle were commonly carried.

*Mounted on a range of military helicopters, the M60 machine gun provides fire suppression support for ground troops*





The loach's armament is operated via the control stick



Gauges and dials are arranged in the pilot's line of sight for easy reference control while the helicopter is airborne

**"HELPING TO ORIENT THE PILOT RELATIVE TO AN ARTIFICIAL HORIZON, THE ATTITUDE INDICATOR WAS LOCATED AT TOP CENTRE, WHILE THE AIRSPEED INDICATOR AND ALTIMETER WERE IMMEDIATELY TO THE RIGHT"**



The pictured Hughes OH-6 Cayuse is on display at the Helicopter Museum, Weston-super-Mare. For more information visit: [www.helicoptermuseum.co.uk](http://www.helicoptermuseum.co.uk)

## COCKPIT

The two-man cockpit of the Hughes OH-6 Cayuse helicopter positioned the pilot on the right and the observer/gunner on the left. Visibility was enhanced with the teardrop or egg shaped compartment. Standard instrumentation was arranged in the forward line of sight. The torquemeter was positioned at upper left. Helping to orient the pilot relative to an artificial horizon, the attitude indicator was located at top centre, while the airspeed indicator and altimeter were immediately to the right. The rpm gauge, compass and oxygen cylinder pressure were in the second tier, centre to right. Armament switches were at lower right on the console.

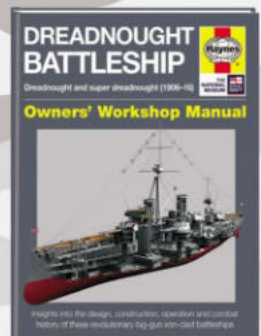
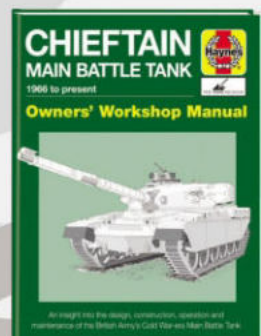
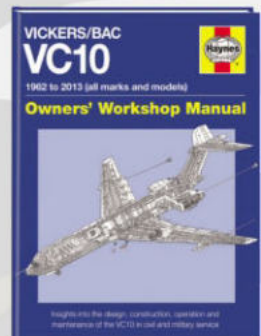
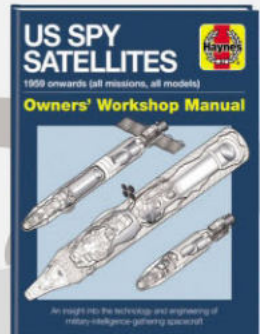


The OH-6A pilot used foot pedals to control the cone and the fan pitch of the helicopter's rotor to assist in turning the aircraft in flight





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The OH-6 has been in service for more than 50 years



The teardrop or egg-shaped design of the cockpit and crew compartment provided generous space for the pilot and observer/gunner aboard the Hughes

## DESIGN

The Hughes OH-6 Cayuse was easily recognised with its teardrop crew compartment shape, and has been referred to as the 'flying egg' at times in the past. Its enclosed fuselage was an improvement over the simple bubble canopy and lattice framework detail of earlier helicopters, while

the landing skids were aerodynamic for better efficiency aloft. The engine was fully enclosed with a hinged clamshell cover and was easily removed for field maintenance. The interior allowed for easy conversion from cargo space to personnel transport with folding rear seats. A pair of doors provided access to either side. These were often removed for jungle operations.

## SERVICE HISTORY

THE HUGHES OH-6A AND MODEL 500 HELICOPTERS ATTEST TO THE VERSATILITY OF A DESIGN WITH BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN APPLICATIONS

The OH-6A Cayuse entered service with the US Army in 1966, and its crews quickly nicknamed the light observation helicopter the Loach. While Hughes Aircraft was simultaneously marketing a civilian variant, the Model 500, the military version was earning battle stars during the Vietnam War. A total of 1,434 OH-6As were produced for the army and by the conflict's end, 658 had been lost to enemy anti-aircraft and small arms fire. Another 269 were destroyed in operational accidents.

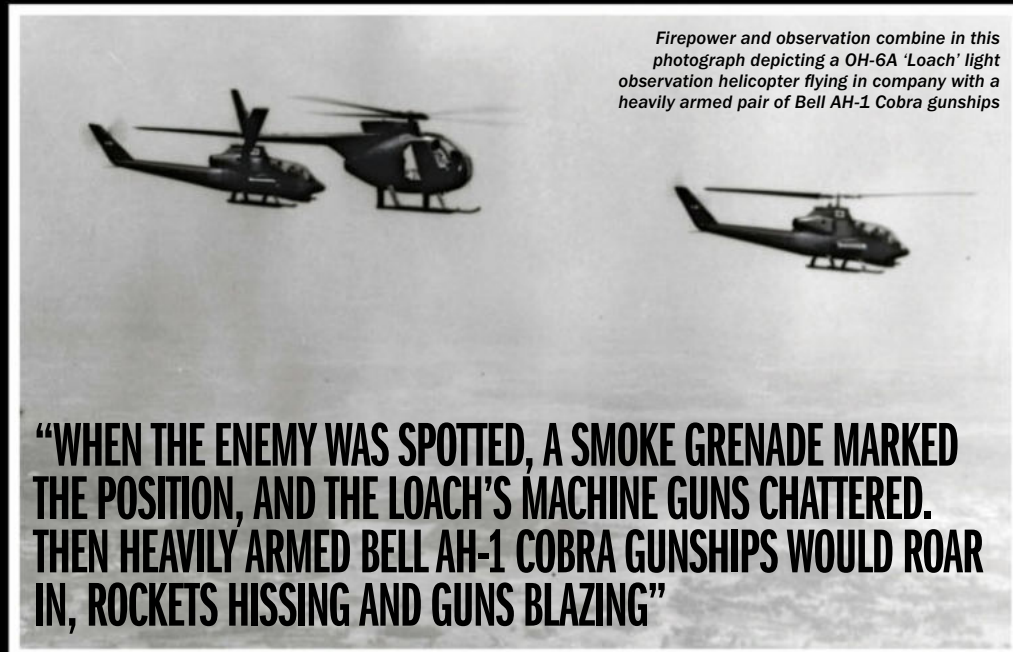
While these numbers may appear extreme, the Loach was in fact a successful combat helicopter. Production slowed when Hughes raised the unit price significantly after delivering the first batch, and the US Congress eventually cancelled the contract. Subsequently, the OH-6A gave way to the Bell OH-58A Kiowa.

Many of the OH-6A losses sustained in Vietnam were due to the hazardous missions undertaken. One veteran described the Loach being used as bait, flying low and slow over enemy

territory to draw fire and pinpoint the locations of hostile troops. When the enemy was spotted, a smoke grenade marked the position, and the Loach's machine guns chattered. Then heavily armed Bell AH-1 Cobra gunships would roar in, rockets hissing and guns blazing.

The modified Loach participated in covert CIA wiretapping efforts during the Vietnam era, deploying listening devices in Southeast Asia. After an abortive attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran in 1980, an elite unit, Task Force 160, was formed to undertake future such missions. A key component was the OH-6A variant dubbed 'Little Bird'.

Amid periodic upgrades, the OH-6A remained in service with the US Army, the Army Reserve and National Guard through the 1980s. Some Loaches were transferred to the US Customs and Border Patrol and other government agencies and remain in service. Variants of the original Model 500 are still being produced.



Firepower and observation combine in this photograph depicting a OH-6A 'Loach' light observation helicopter flying in company with a heavily armed pair of Bell AH-1 Cobra gunships

**"WHEN THE ENEMY WAS SPOTTED, A SMOKE GRENADE MARKED THE POSITION, AND THE LOACH'S MACHINE GUNS CHATTERED. THEN HEAVILY ARMED BELL AH-1 COBRA GUNSHIPS WOULD ROAR IN, ROCKETS HISSING AND GUNS BLAZING"**



# REVIEWS

Our pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

## CHURCHILL'S ARMY 1939-1945 THE MEN, MACHINES AND ORGANISATION

**Author:** Stephen Bull **Publisher:** Bloomsbury **Price:** £40 **Release date:** Out Now

A FASCINATING LOOK AT THE MANY FACETS OF CHURCHILL'S ARMY

The importance of Churchill's indomitable spirit and bold leadership to Britain's cause in WWII has been well documented. What is perhaps less well known, however, is the way he worked with those around him and the actual make up of the forces that he played a huge part (occasionally for the worse) in commanding. This exhaustive work is Stephen Bull's superb attempt to shine a light on both.

The book begins by detailing Churchill's military experience prior to WWII, including his disastrous support for the doomed Gallipoli campaign that nearly finished his career, before examining his meteoric rise to power as Nazi Germany conquered Europe. Both testify to his natural ability to lead, but he wasn't just a rambunctious bulldozer.

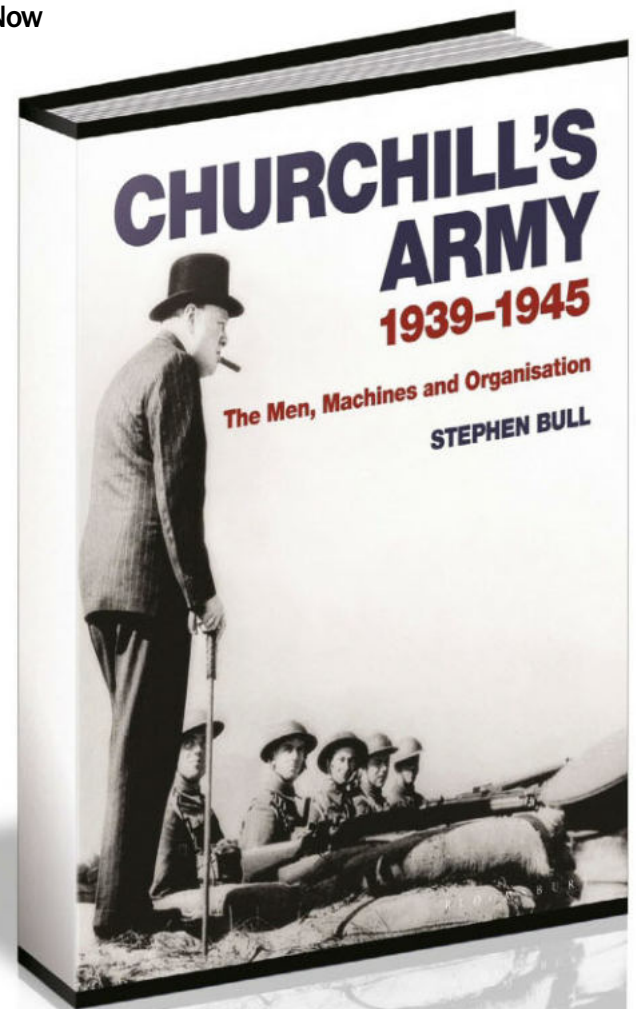
Fascinating excerpts from letters that Churchill wrote to Neville Chamberlain prior to replacing him as prime minister, as well as notes to other leading figures, reveal a man that would examine even the finest details in order to ensure his country was adequately defended. As one of the few that could see what was coming, Churchill was adamant that Britain stocked up on heavy weaponry in time for the coming war.

It's particularly interesting to discover how Churchill's experiences of WWI influenced his views of WWII. Even a man with the foresight to imagine a trench-spanning 'car' (an early idea of what would become the tank), and later the concept of Britain's Special Forces, could not resist the idea that the fight against Hitler's Germany would be another static conflict. Thankfully for Britain and the Allied cause, Churchill quickly disabused himself of this view as the Wehrmacht's mechanised forces tore across France in May 1940.

The following chapters focus on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from soldiers' ceremonial attire and berets, to complex analysis of weapons such as the Boys anti-tank gun and the Mark III sten. Intricate diagrams of machinery like the Matilda tank help the reader to better understand how Britain actually waged her war.

However, arguably the most interesting chapter is to be found at the start: The Generals. While the likes of field marshal Bernard Montgomery (known as Monty) and the wonderfully named Edmund Ironside will be familiar to most readers, it is the stories of men such as Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the imperial general staff, that make this such an absorbing read. As the prime minister cast many of Brooke's peers aside for their apparent inadequacies, the calm and conservative Brooke remained an enduring presence that Churchill listened to throughout the war.

While the minutiae of medals, badges and helmets will only appeal to the most committed WWII academics, this is an enlightening and excellently compiled book for everyone. It deserves to be on the shelf of anyone with an interest in Churchill and wartime Britain. It is a refreshingly honest appraisal of Churchill's mercurial genius, which often resulted in him clinging to failing ideas just as much as it helped Britain's cause.



**"IT IS THE STORIES OF MEN SUCH AS SIR ALAN BROOKE, CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF, THAT MAKE THIS SUCH AN ABSORBING READ"**

*Left: Sir Alan Brooke was known for his forthright opinions of other allied leaders*





# THE LOCOMOTIVE OF WAR

## MONEY, EMPIRE, POWER AND GUILT

**Writer:** Peter Clarke **Publisher:** Bloomsbury **Price:** £25 **Released:** 9 February 2017

THE GENESIS AND UNFOLDING OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR VIEWED THROUGH A NARROW GROUP OF KEY PLAYERS

This isn't a book about trains. Let's get that clear from the start. But having worked through its 358 pages, this reviewer is not entirely sure he can tell the prospective reader what the book is actually about. Usually, a book's subtitle is there to explain to the browser what he or she will find on its pages but in this case, 'Money, Empire, Power and Guilt' is so wide ranging as to include almost everything.

So, in his quest to uncover the book's true meaning, your reviewer referred back to the prologue, where the author tells us what the book *is* about. It doesn't help a great deal, although it does tell us where the title comes from: it's a quote from Trotsky, but modified. He originally said, "War, Comrades, is a great locomotive of history." So, is this a book about war as the driver of history?

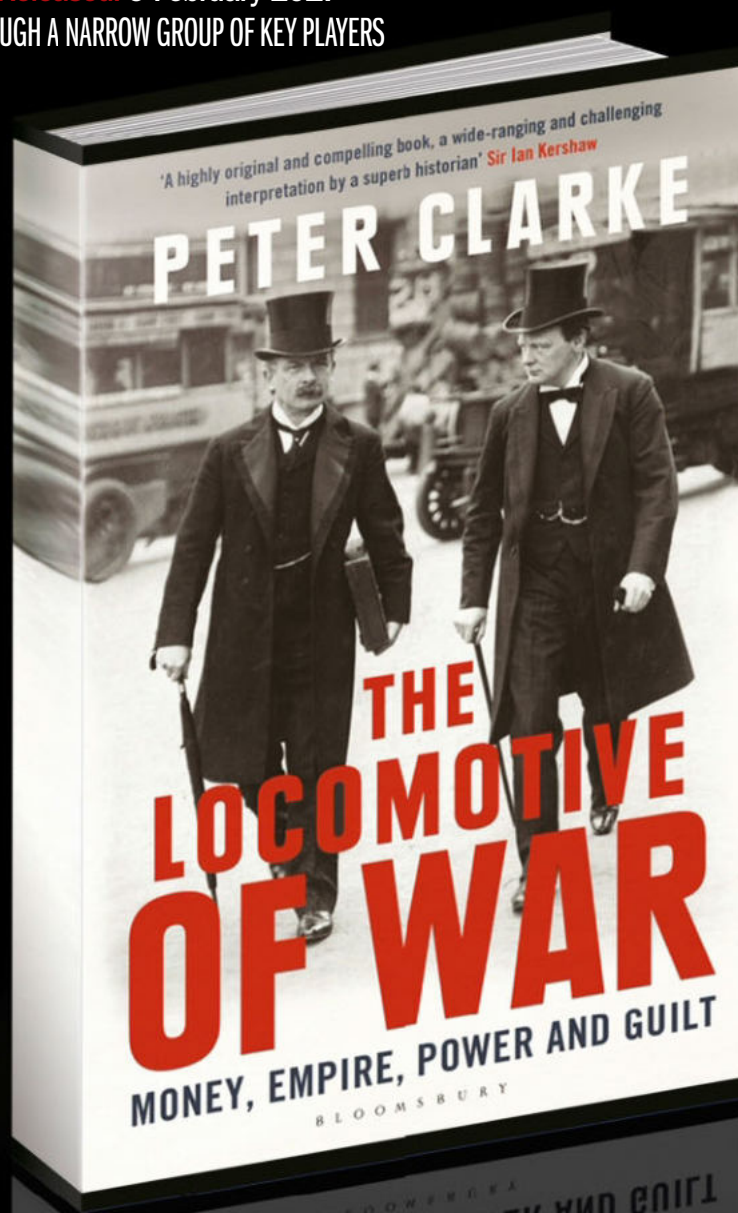
No, not really. Yes, it deals with World War I, but the conflict itself remains largely off the page. The chapter titles are a better clue as to the book's nature: like "The Disciple as Prophet: Thomas Woodrow Wilson" and "Goodbye to the Garden of Eden: John Maynard Keynes."

Yes, this is a book about people. But very specific people: some of the key political figures of World War I in Britain and America – all of who knew each other. This is a book about how the political beliefs and personal characteristics of a small number of people successively involved Britain and America in war. For what Clarke makes clear is how it was the particular response of leaders such as Herbert Asquith and David Lloyd George to events such as the German invasion of neutral Belgium, a response shaped by their formation in the liberal tradition of William Gladstone, that produced the moral outrage that led Britain into war, and later drew America into the conflict.

As such, it's a forensic examination of the causes of war within a very narrow focus. This narrow focus requires of the reader a reasonably broad knowledge of the political personalities of early-20th century Britain and America to avoid frequent Wikipedia stops. It does, however, allow the author some cutting asides. Clarke's note on how Edward Grey – the Foreign Secretary remembered for "the lamps are going out" quote – under the strain of impending war ascended to his only two days of eloquence in an allotted span of near three score years and ten, is wonderful and one of a number of quotes worthy a place in future collections.

The curious effect of Clarke's close examination of such a limited number of individuals is that the book, surely without meaning to, almost becomes a modern restatement of Carlyle's great man theory of history (where history is the result of the actions and decisions of great men, rather than being the consequence of a vast range of events and individuals). Clarke does take care to place the 'great men' here portrayed within the context of the liberal tradition of thinking as espoused by Gladstone, so it's a modified 'great man' exposition, but the reader will be hard pressed to conclude, after reading this book, anything other than that history's locomotive is driven by a very few men (and they are all men). This is unlikely to have been the author's intention.

Left to right: David Lloyd George, Edward Grey and Herbert Asquith



**"IT'S A FORENSIC EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF WAR WITHIN A VERY NARROW FOCUS. THIS NARROW FOCUS REQUIRES OF THE READER A REASONABLY BROAD KNOWLEDGE OF THE POLITICAL PERSONALITIES OF EARLY-20TH CENTURY BRITAIN AND AMERICA TO AVOID FREQUENT WIKIPEDIA STOPS"**



# THE ROYAL NAVY

## 100 YEARS OF MARITIME WARFARE IN THE MODERN AGE



**Author:** Julian Thompson **Publisher:** Andre Deutsch **Price:** £40 **Release date:** Out Now

### A CENTURY OF BRITAIN'S PROWESS AT SEA

As an island nation, Britain has relied on the might of its navy to project its power on the global stage for centuries. This beautifully illustrated history of 100 years of the Royal Navy fighting Britain's enemies and securing the seas is a fitting tribute to its courageous sailors and cutting-edge technology.

Instead of being a painfully detailed book that gets bogged down in examining the exact specifications of every ship and the lives of the men who commanded them, Thompson has created a wonderful narrative of exciting battles, supplemented with stunning photography and a range of paintings.

The book starts by looking at the vessels that defended the nation during WWI, before examining how the lessons learned in that conflict shaped Britain's approach to WWII. It is no exaggeration to say that the very existence of the nation, let alone avoiding a military defeat, rested largely on the Royal Navy's shoulders. Without the vital lifeline of the Atlantic shipping that kept Britain supplied – largely achieved due to the presence of warships escorting merchant boats – Germany would have knocked them out of the war.

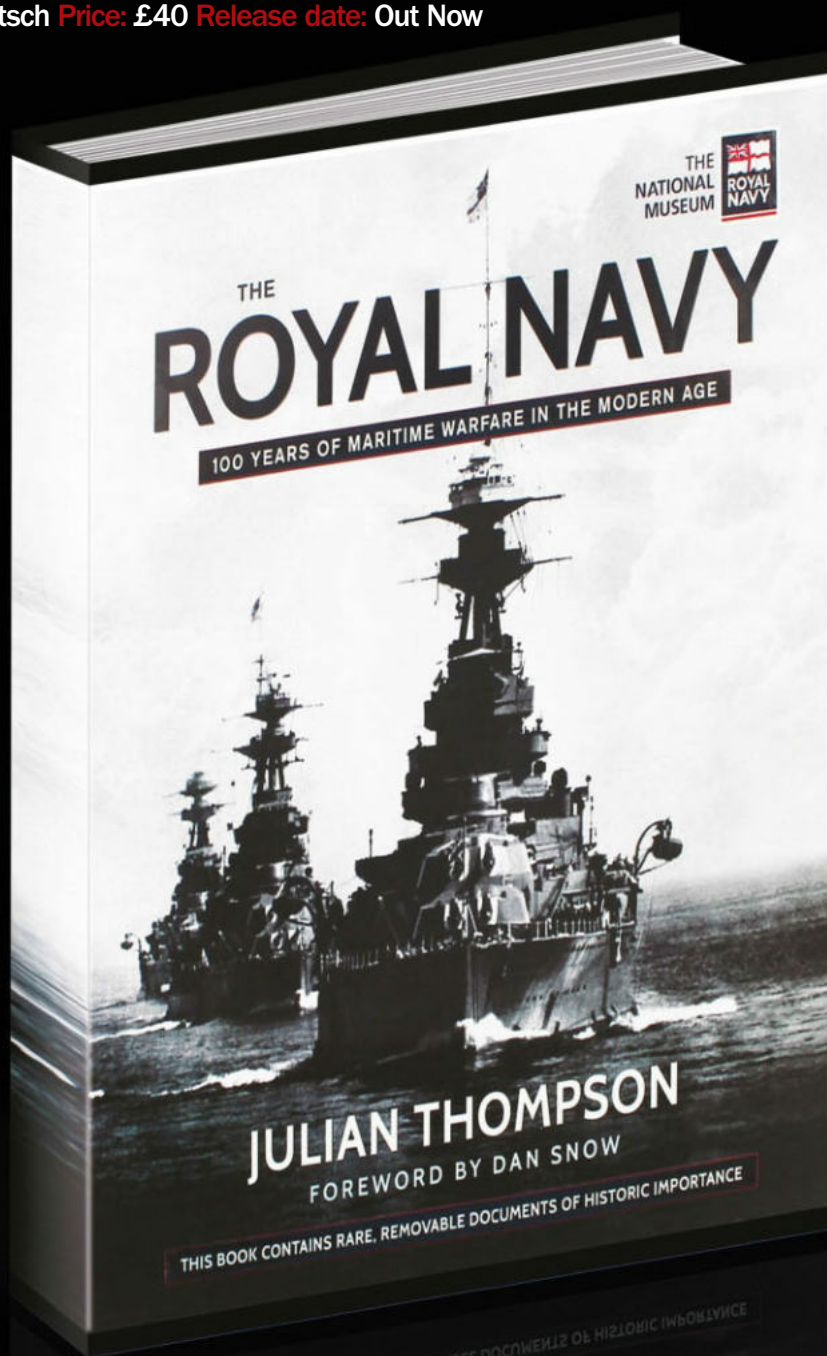
As you progress further into the book, Britain's involvement in various theatres, including the Korean War and the Falklands War, is explained. Having served as a royal marine for 34 years commanding operations in the Falklands, Thompson is especially well placed to write on this particular subject, and his experience adds gravitas to his work.

He also reveals the naval element of the cat and mouse game that was the Cold War, and also the Royal Navy's non-combat roles conducting anti-piracy operations and delivering aid in times of humanitarian crisis, which is particularly appropriate given the current refugee crisis.

But what really makes this book stand out are the three pullout sections containing a total of 15 loose copies of genuine war documents. The first comprises seven maps, one of which reveals the logistical planning involved in the infamous sinking of the Bismarck, which entailed a four-staged assault by both battle ships and aircraft before it finally slipped below the waves during the Battle of the Atlantic. The preparations for the D-Day landings, among other historical engagements, are also included, providing the book with a rare sense of immediacy.

The second pocket contains copies (scribbles and all) of the notes taken on the numerous duels between British and German ships. It also includes a guide issued to sailors on what to do with sensitive documents in the event of capture and how to identify enemy ships. The final envelope is a stash of notes on the assault on the Falklands in 1982 and a pamphlet on the HMS Dreadnaught. War diaries and reports are also included.

Overall this is a vivid and informative look at an integral part of Britain's recent history and is highly recommended for anyone with a love of naval warfare and the battleships that have served Britain in the past and continue to today. It is literally a treasure trove, packed full of authentic looking documents that allow the reader to imagine themselves aboard one of these fortresses of the sea.



**"WHAT REALLY MAKES THIS BOOK STAND OUT ARE THE THREE PULLOUT SECTIONS CONTAINING A TOTAL OF 15 LOOSE COPIES OF GENUINE WAR DOCUMENTS"**



# BLOODY APRIL 1917

**Writer:** Norman Franks, Russell Guest and Frank Bailey

**Publisher:** Grub Street **Price:** £15 **Released:** April 2017

100 YEARS ON FROM THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS' DISASTROUS MONTH, A HIGHLY RESEARCHED NEW BOOK HAS BEEN WRITTEN TO SHED LIGHT ON A LETHAL EPISODE IN AERIAL WARFARE

By April 1917, the Western Front was a gigantic mass of blood and misery. The landscape of northern France and Belgium was pockmarked by a continued set of failed battles from Loos, Verdun and the Somme. Once the winter of 1916-17 was over, the British and French planned another land offensive at Arras and they would be assisted by their respective air forces.

The air offensive would primarily be conducted by the Royal Flying Corps and, to a lesser extent, the French Air Force in attempt to provide detailed reconnaissance to the troops on the ground. However, they would be fiercely opposed by the new highly trained 'Jasta' squadrons of the Imperial German Air Service. The Germans were equipped with superior aircraft and they were eager to get to grips with the enemy. One of these pilots was an already distinguished fighter, Manfred von Richthofen, the

commander of Jasta 11 and better known to history as 'The Red Baron'.

The result was the mass destruction of primarily British aircraft on a scale never before seen in aerial warfare. Such was the month-long carnage that it has been known ever since as 'Bloody April'.

To mark the centenary of this airborne bloodbath for the Royal Flying Corps, aviation historians Norman Franks, Russell Guest and Frank Bailey have compiled a unique day-by-day account of Bloody April.

For those interested in aviation history, this book is essential reading. The authors have written a highly detailed work that is meticulously peppered with eyewitness testimony, quality research, original photographs and accessible statistics. It also recreates the period for the reader and has a keen eye for accuracy and as a reference work it comes highly recommended.



**"THE AUTHORS HAVE WRITTEN A HIGHLY DETAILED WORK THAT IS METICULOUSLY PEPPERED WITH EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY, QUALITY RESEARCH, ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND ACCESSIBLE STATISTICS"**

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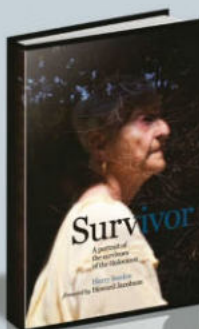
**PRICE** £20.40 **RELEASED** OUT NOW

"The most insidious ally of the denier is scale. So often the sheer enormity of the Holocaust and its 6 million Jewish victims can be difficult to comprehend and in that uncomprehending fog the dangerous lie can grow and thrive. It's partly as a reaction to this vastness that Anne Frank's *The Diary Of A Young Girl* (1947) has endured, providing a face onto which its young readers can project their own experiences and through this understand the implications of state-sponsored slaughter.

*Survivor*, a project by award-winning photographer Harry Borden, is a collection of portraits of more than 100 survivors along with a handwritten message (their biographies can be found at the back of the book), which proves similarly affecting.

These faces, lined with age and life, bring the reality of the Shoah into our lives. They create a very real link where only the abstraction of dates, data and sepia newsreel hold court. Their short messages – some sad, some uplifting – read like a personal address, whispered between the subject and the reader.

Over the course of this volume, three things become immediately clear. First: despite evidence of lives well lived in the aftermath of the Third Reich, we can't help but define Borden's subjects through the horrors they endured. Second: where biographies are written by next of kin we become painfully aware that many of Borden's subjects have passed away since their photograph was taken, a reminder of just how precious an undertaking like this is. Third, each individual tale of survival against the odds is a reminder of that warning against relying too heavily on the testimony of Holocaust survivors, because their experience wasn't the 'normal', or most common, experience of the Holocaust. The 'normal' experience was not one of survival. They did not get to grow old and gaze back at us through these pages, and that is a difficult – but necessary – realisation to swallow.



## **HISTORY'S PEOPLE**

EXPLORE THE STORIES OF INDIVIDUALS, FROM DEVIOUS DICTATORS TO INNOVATIVE INVENTORS  
**AUTHOR** MARGARET MACMILLAN **PUBLISHER** PROFILE BOOKS

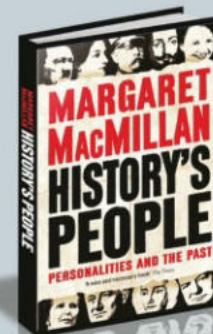
**PRICE** £8.99 **RELEASED** OUT NOW

History is full of iconic personalities and it's these characters that have moulded the world we live in. At least that's the view of acclaimed author Margaret MacMillan. *History's People* investigates the lives of individuals rather than events, groups or entire civilisations. The book is packed full of alternate history and digs deep into key turning points. Would Al Gore have gone to war with Iraq if he'd been president rather than George W Bush? Would Germany have been unified if it weren't for Bismarck?

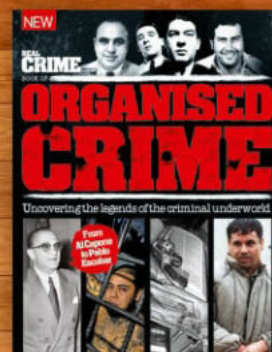
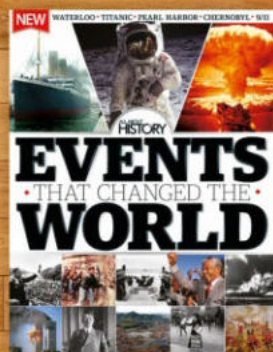
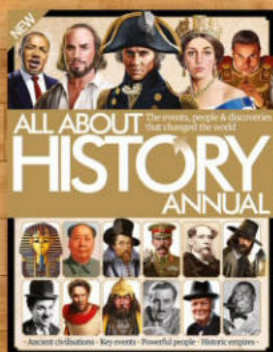
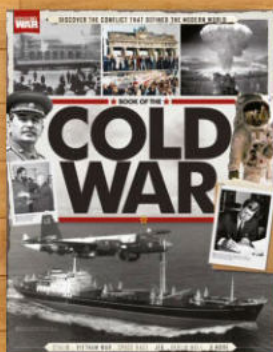
MacMillan also sheds light on important yet lesser-known figures. There's Michel de Montaigne, a French philosopher who was the first to question what it is to be human, and William Lyon Mackenzie King, a relatively unknown but influential Canadian politician.

The chapters are split into different categories such as 'Hubris', which focuses on political leaders and dictators, and 'Daring' that dissects military minds. There's a lot to like, whether you're interested in how the writings of Karl Marx changed politics, the importance of Mikhail Gorbachev in preventing nuclear war or a trip inside the minds of Churchill, Hitler and Napoleon.

MacMillan's accessible yet thought-provoking writing helps the reader comprehend the significance of an individual's actions or thought processes. It also helps question what would have happened if these figures didn't exist or acted differently. As 2016 was the year in which the international community got to know the personalities of the likes of Donald Trump, so *History's People* may help provide an insight into why today's political figures think and act like they do.







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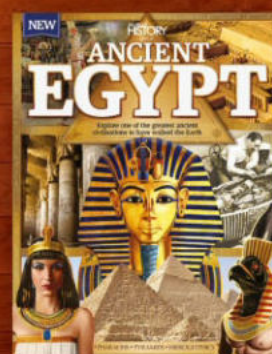
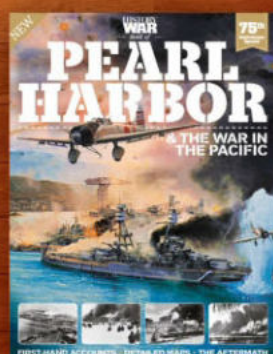
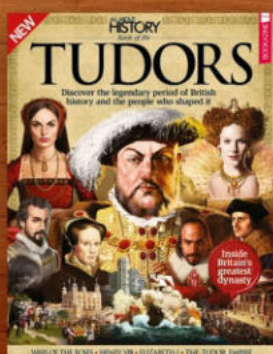
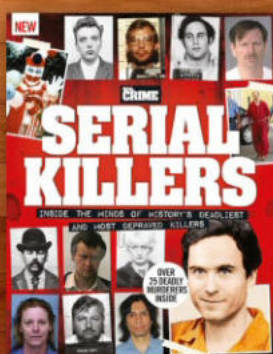
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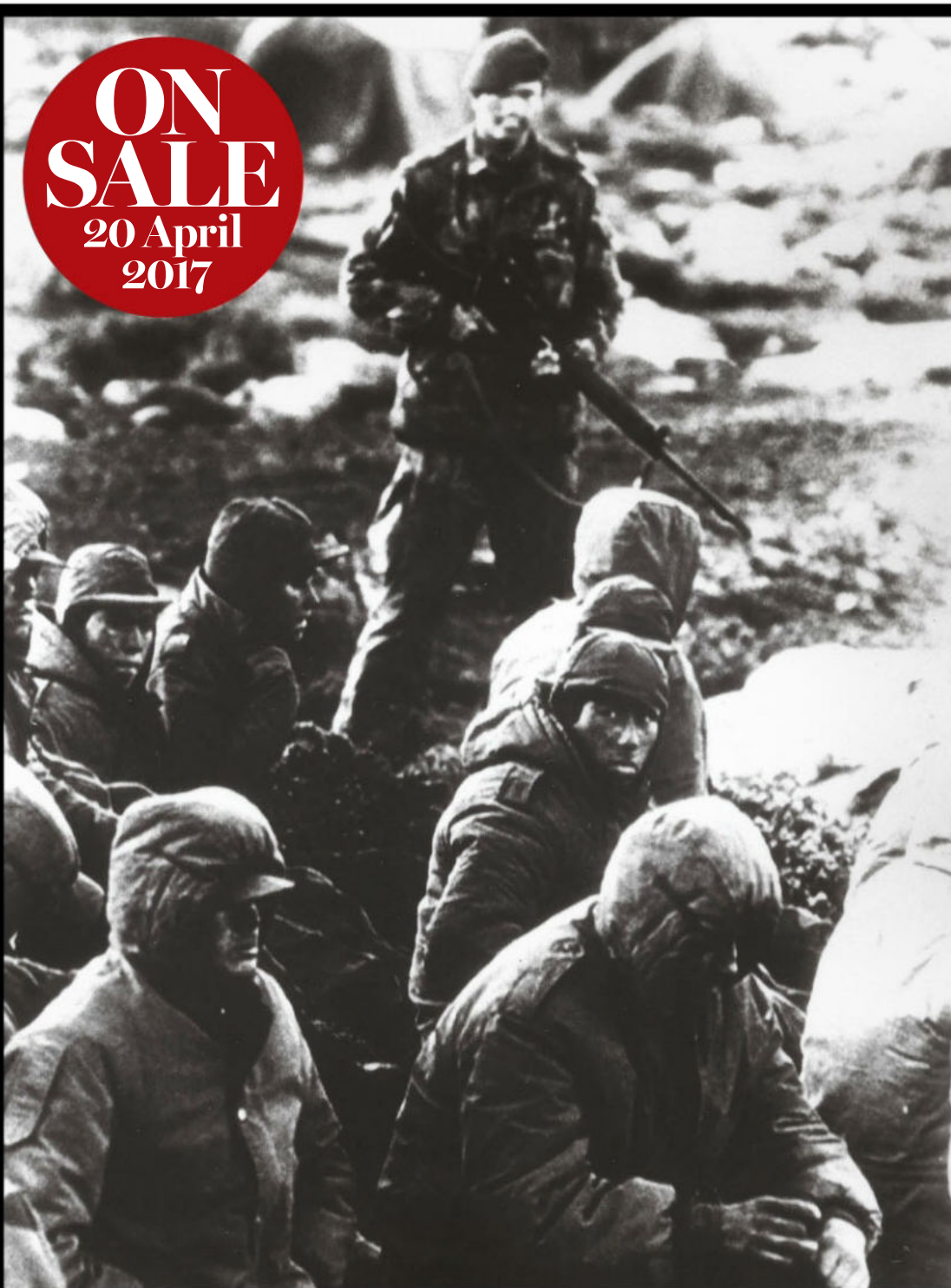
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# WEHRMACHT TOILET PAPER

Although its manufacturing cost was minimal during the 1940s, this bland but essential piece of field equipment was auctioned for hundreds of Euros

**N**apoleon Bonaparte once said that “an army marches on its stomach” and it is true that the mundane features of war actually dominate military life rather than battles or campaigns. The German Wehrmacht of WWII was no exception and in 2016 a unique relic of their supplies was put up for auction: an unused roll of toilet paper.

The unopened roll of “Klosettpapier” (toilet paper) would have been considered a wartime luxury, particularly in the harsh conditions of the Eastern Front, where troops would have commonly used other means to relieve themselves. In 1940s Germany, toilet paper was reputedly so scratchy that some soldiers preferred to use the softer sheets of the official Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*.

This paper is not just branded with the emblem of the Third Reich, but also the Edelweiss, the famous Alpine flower. A traditional Germanic symbol in Austria, Switzerland and Germany, the Edelweiss was frequently utilised by Nazi propaganda. The literal translation of the word ‘Edelweiss’ is ‘noble and white’, meaning it became very easy for the Nazis to twist this innocent symbol to their own notorious ends. It was represented as Adolf Hitler’s favourite flower and also inspired a marching song popular with German troops called *Es War Ein Edelweiss* (‘It was an Edelweiss’).

This pictured roll was eventually acquired by an Irish collector of Nazi military equipment and, despite its extremely humble beginnings, was sold for 290 Euros in September 2016, at Whyte’s Auctioneers in Dublin.

**“IN 1940S GERMANY, TOILET PAPER WAS REPUTEDLY SO SCRATCHY THAT SOME SOLDIERS PREFERRED TO USE THE SOFTER SHEETS OF THE OFFICIAL NAZI NEWSPAPER, VÖLKISCHER BEOBACHTER”**



**Above:** Apart from its most obvious use, toilet paper has often been applied for other purposes. During the Gulf War, the US Army used toilet paper to camouflage their tanks

**Below:** A toilet sign in a WWII German bunker at Ludwigshafen. “Edelweiss Klosettpapier” would have been an essential supply for the Wehrmacht throughout Europe



Image courtesy of Whytes.com and justcollecting.com

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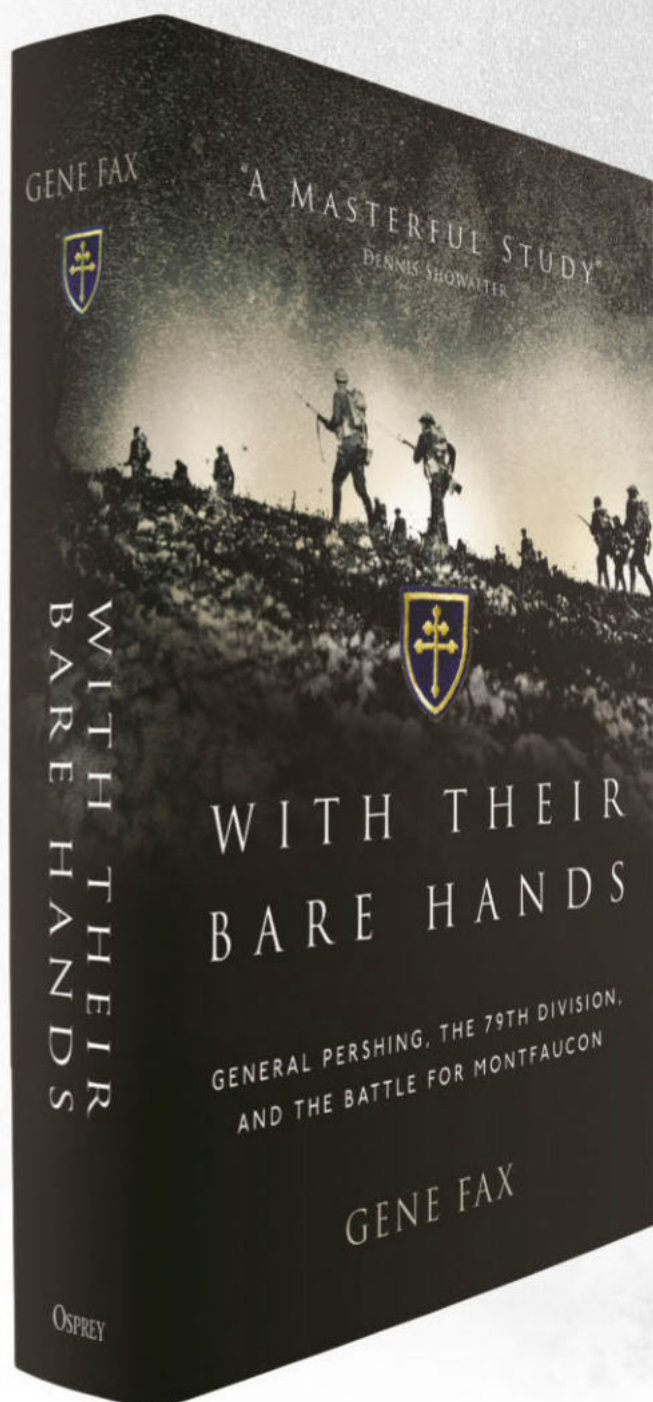
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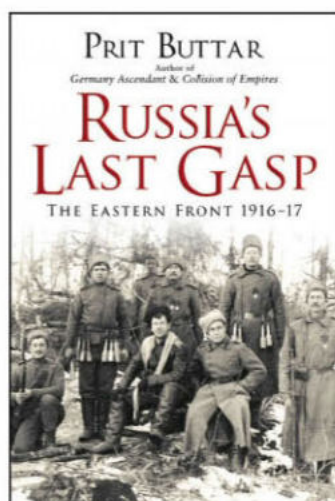
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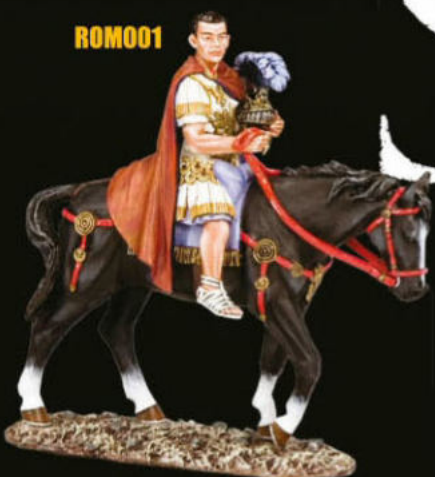
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